

# **AN EXAMINATION AND CRITIQUE OF JOHN MACMURRAY'S CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS**

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PREFACE

The purpose of this work is to examine in detail the idea of community in the work of John Macmurray, a distinguished Scottish Moral Philosopher, who wrote primarily during the middle part of the twentieth century. As a prolegomena to the examination of Macmurray's use of the concept of community, a review of his life and work will be presented as well as an analysis and review of his philosophy in terms of the larger framework of philosophical and theological thought. This will be followed by a general examination of Macmurray's thinking with special attention paid to his concept of religion. After this general introduction, the aim of this study will be to examine critically the concept of community which lies at the very centre of Macmurray's thought and can be considered to be the central theme of his thinking on religion and ethics. The ultimate concern of this study will be to examine closely Macmurray's approach to Christian ethics in the light of the examination that has been made of his use of the concept of community.

ABSTRACT

John Macmurray was a Scottish moral philosopher who wrote during the middle part of the twentieth century and was influenced but not dominated by many schools of philosophy such as personalism and empiricism. The main task of this study is to examine critically, Macmurray's concept of community and its importance for his understanding of religion, the self and Christian ethics.

John Macmurray presented three modes of apperception, which are variously labelled, but are most commonly called the scientific, artistic and religious modes. Macmurray considered the first two modes to be negative or inadequate and the third mode, i.e. the religious mode, to be the only positive or adequate mode. The focal point of the mode of religion is the personal relations within the context of community. Macmurray substituted 'I do' for Descartes' 'I think' which introduced the assumption that action is primary and reflection is secondary. Macmurray argued that immediate experience is experience uninterrupted by reflection. Immediate experience is broken by reflection, but reflection is necessary since it makes it possible to examine actions without 'changing the world'. Macmurray held that the relation between the self and the other within the community is seminal to all other activities and modes of reflection. The relationships motivated by love and in terms of the other, i.e. personal relations, are the basic constituent of community as opposed to society which is motivated by fear and is based upon impersonal relationships. Macmurray asserted that the religious mode of apperception, i.e. the communal, is central to all human activity and reflection. Macmurray drew the well founded conclusion that man's whole life is rooted in the religious mode. This places religion in the sphere of every day experience, while dismissing the assumption that religion is confined to rare, subjective and particular experiences. Macmurray also pointed out that religion is beneficial to the community on the practical level, since it contributes to the community's self-awareness. Macmurray rejected the teleological approach and deontological approach to ethics, i.e. the scientific and artistic modes, as a basis for ethics and argued that the communal mode of apperception was the only adequate perception of ethics. The concept of community and its concomitant conceptions of fellowship and the personal 'I-Thou' relation are the foundation upon which Macmurray based his explanation and examination of the self, religion and ethics.

Macmurray has placed the concept of community at the very centre of his definition and thinking about religion, the self and Christian ethics. However, I have argued that a completely communal or relational view does not represent adequately or explore fully the concepts of the self, religion and Christian ethics. I have argued that Macmurray's dependence upon the idea of community and his utilisation of the concept of community is threatened by a serious internal contradiction within the concept of community, i.e. there are two opposing and irreconcilable elements, which are the exclusiveness of the 'I-Thou' relation as opposed to the all inclusive nature of the fellowship within the community. In my view the idea of community by itself is inadequate when used to explain completely and to define the self. Macmurray rejected the idea of the 'isolated-I' and only considered the self in terms of the 'I-Thou', i.e. in terms of its communal elements.

However, the rejection of the 'isolated-I' means that only the instrumental valuation will be applicable, while the intrinsic, unique value of the individual, upon which the instrumental valuation is predicated, is overlooked. I would argue that Macmurray's emphasis upon the community implies that the community is the primary phenomenon, while reducing the individual to an epiphenomenon. I have argued that Macmurray's approach threatens to reduce religion to nothing more than a constituent of society, by overlooking the solitary aspects of religion, i.e. the individual struggle and quest. I have argued that a heterocentric, i.e. mainly communal, view of ethics is over-simplified and will lead to questionable conclusions. Heterocentrism presents problems since it threatens to become nothing more than altruism which may lead people to make incompatible and different decisions. Since the basic element in the communal mode of morality is the harmony of the community, one might only apply what may be described as the minimal interpretation of morality. I have argued that Macmurray's idea of community, when applied to ethics and in particular to Christian ethics, threatens to reduce Jesus' teachings about ethics to simply an anthropological study. There is an inherent danger in trying to understand God in anthropological terms, since one cannot fully understand the eternal in terms of the temporary. Macmurray has over-emphasised the love between neighbours and not given God's love its central mediating and modifying place in human relations. The theocentric approach cannot be totally defined heterocentrically.

Macmurray's thought contained valuable insights and it should be carefully studied and utilised. However, there is a danger in viewing things only in terms of community, since the community may well become the principle phenomenon to be investigated. One might say that Christian ethics and the Christian religion is not merely a matter of community, but that the community is an integral part of our understanding of both Christian ethics and the Christian religion.

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UNIVERSITY OF ST. ANDREWS

AN EXAMINATION AND CRITIQUE OF  
JOHN MACMURRAY'S CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY  
FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Divinity  
in partial fulfilment of the regulations of the Degree of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

John Nichols Adams

St. Andrews

January 1980



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9705



## C E R T I F I C A T E

I certify that John Nichols Adams has fulfilled the conditions of the resolution of the University Court No. 1, and that he is qualified to submit this thesis in application for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

## D E C L A R A T I O N

I hereby declare that the following thesis is based on the results of research carried out by myself, that it is my own composition and that it has not previously been presented for a Higher Degree. The research was carried out at the University of St. Andrews under the supervision of . Rev. S. Mackie.

Index to Abbreviations of John Macmurray's Works

- BS The Boundaries of Science: A Study in the Philosophy of Psychology (London: Faber and Faber Ltd.) 1939.
- CH The Clue to History (London: Student Christian Movement Press) 1938.
- CF Conditions of Freedom. The Second Lectures of the Chancellor Dunning Trust, delivered at Queen's University, Kingston University, Ontario, 1949 (Toronto: The Ryerson Press) 1949.
- CS Creative Society: A Study of the Relation of Christianity to Communism (London: Student Christian Movement Press) 1935.
- DMM "The Dualism of Mind and Matter" Philosophy X:39 (July 1935) pp. 264-278
- FMW Freedom in the Modern World: Broadcast Talks on Modern Problems (London: Faber and Faber Ltd.) 1932.
- IU Interpreting the Universe (2nd edition) (London: Faber and Faber Ltd.) 1933.
- PC The Philosophy of Communism (London: Faber and Faber Ltd.) 1933
- PCE "Prolegomena to a Christian Ethic" (Scottish Journal of Theology IX (1956) pp. 1-13
- PPE "The Principle of Personality in Experience" PAS XXIX (1928-1929) pp. 316-330
- PR Persons in Relation. The Gifford Lectures delivered at the University of Glasgow in 1954 (London: Faber and Faber Ltd.) 1961.
- RE Reason and Emotion (London: Faber and Faber Ltd.) 1935. (Paperback 1972).
- RAS Religion, Art and Science: A Study of the Reflective Activities in Man. The Forward Lectures, 1960 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press) 1961.
- SRR Search for Reality in Religion. Swarthmore Lecture, 1965 (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.) 1965.
- SA The Self as Agent. The Gifford Lectures delivered at the University of Glasgow in 1953 (London: Faber and Faber Ltd.) 1957.
- SRE The Structure of Religious Experience (London: Faber and Faber Ltd.) 1936.

PART I

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1

BIOGRAPHY

John Macmurray is not well known and his philosophy has received little attention beyond a few doctoral dissertations and passing references in the works of such individuals as Karl Popper<sup>1</sup> and John C. Bennett<sup>2</sup>. This notwithstanding his thinking produces an important all-out attack upon some of the central problems of theology and philosophy.

In order to understand properly the thought of Macmurray one needs to have some general idea about his life which provided a general background to his work. Macmurray was born on February 16, 1891 in Maxwellton, Kirkcudbrightshire into a family that was deeply religious and whose lives centred around religious questions<sup>3</sup>. Macmurray wrote in his autobiographical work Search for Reality in Religion that: "My parents were at one in a Christian piety which dictated the form of family life and determined its atmosphere".<sup>4</sup> Shortly after their marriage Macmurray's parents came under the influence of the American evangelists, Moody and Sankey. Macmurray's father grew dissatisfied with the Church of Scotland and began to search for a "more satisfactory body of Christians"<sup>5</sup> with whom they could associate themselves. After moving to Aberdeen for the sake of his children's education, Macmurray's father joined a Baptist, then an evangelical Baptist church and then the Plymouth Bretheren. In 1909 Macmurray's father was transferred to Glasgow and John Macmurray matriculated at the University of Glasgow.

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1. Popper, Karl, The Open Society and Its Enemies (London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1945), Vol II, p.230
  2. Bennett, John C. Christian Realism (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1941), p.51
  3. Thomason, William Paul, "The Empirical Basis for Religion in John Macmurray's Philosophy" (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1971), p.8
  4. SRR, p.5
  5. SRR, p.7

Later when commenting upon this period Macmurray felt that: "all this religious activity was second-hand and somewhat priggish. It was the result of the teaching of others, absorbed and elaborated by a quick and busy mind, rather than the expression of a personal religious experience".<sup>6</sup> However, Macmurray did not doubt the validity of his parent's experience, but the validity of their doctrinal expression.<sup>7</sup>

There was two important occurrences during Macmurray's years at the University of Glasgow. Firstly, he was allowed to take science courses, while pursuing his degree in Classics. Secondly, there was his involvement with the Student Christian Movement whose influence Macmurray later believed to have been "almost wholly for good".<sup>8</sup> During this period Macmurray while involved in the teaching of a Bible study group, applied the methods of comparison and analysis, which he had learned in his classical studies, to the Bible.<sup>9</sup> This early experience was the precursor to Macmurray's later recourse to scientific methods to examine and test religious belief.<sup>10</sup> Macmurray later wrote that during this period he held the hope that: "through testing and modifications we should arrive at a religion which science need not be ashamed to serve?"<sup>11</sup>

In 1913 Macmurray took his first degree and won a Snell Exhibition to Oxford and in October, 1913 he entered Balliol College. However, Macmurray's education was interrupted by World War I, which posed for Macmurray the problem of pacifism. He decided to join the medical corps as a compromise. He later accepted a commission in the Queen's

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6. SRR, p.8

7. Thomason, op. cit., p.9

8. SRR, p.12

9. SRR, pp 13-14

10. Thomason, op. cit., p.10

11. SRR, p.14

Own Cameron Highlanders in 1916 and was wounded in the final German Offensive in 1918, and awarded the Military Cross.<sup>12</sup>

An important incident that dates from this period happened when Macmurray came home on medical leave and was asked to preach to a congregation in London. Macmurray recalled that: "I took the opportunity to advise the church and the Christians in it, to guard against the war-mentality; and to keep themselves, so far as possible, aloof from the quarrel, so that they would be in a position - and of a temper - to undertake their proper tasks as Christians when the war was over, of reconciliations".<sup>13</sup> The congregation reacted to this in a very negative fashion, since no-one spoke to Macmurray and he was made to feel the hostility. This incident led to Macmurray's decision to avoid becoming a member of a Christian church. Macmurray kept this resolution until the end of his University teaching career. At the end of his teaching career, Macmurray applied for membership in the Society of Friends. In any case this did not mean that Macmurray abandoned his interest in religion.

Macmurray returned to Oxford immediately after the armistice and completed a shortened course of Greats after two years.<sup>14</sup> Macmurray held several important academic posts during his teaching career. He was the John Locke Scholar in Mental Philosophy at Oxford in 1919. He then became a lecturer at the University of Manchester. He then went to the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa, where he was the Professor of Philosophy. He returned to England in 1922 and became the Fellow and Classical Tutor and Jowett Lecturer in

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12. "Obituary, Professor J. Macmurray, Distinguished Moral Philosopher", The Times, June 23, 1976, p.17

13. SRR, p.21

14. SRR, p.15

Philosophy at Balliol College, Oxford. From 1928-1944 he was the Grote Professor of Mind and Logic at the University of London. His last academic appointment was the Professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh from 1944 to 1958.<sup>15</sup>

Macmurray's earliest publications included Freedom in the Modern World (1932) which included essays based upon lectures given on the wireless.<sup>16</sup> Another early work of importance was Interpreting the Universe (1933) in which Macmurray dealt with a number of fundamental philosophical problems. Macmurray's main work was published under the general title of The Form of the Personal which came from the Gifford Lectures of 1953-1954 given at the University of Glasgow and came out as two separate volumes entitled The Self as Agent (1957) and Persons in Relation (1961). These two volumes constitute his major philosophical statement. Other works which were first delivered as lectures include The Structure of Religious Experience (1926), which was the sixteenth series of Terry Lectures at Yale University, Religion, Art and Science (1961), the 1960 Forwood Lectures at Liverpool University; and the autobiographical work The Search for Reality in Religion (1965) which was the Swarthmore Lectures.<sup>17</sup>

In 1916 Macmurray married Elizabeth Hyde. Macmurray retired from the chair of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh in 1958. Macmurray died on June 21, 1976 at the age of 85.<sup>18</sup>

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15. Thomason, op. cit., pp.12-13

16. FMW, p.7

17. Thomason, op. cit., p.13

18. The Times, op. cit., p.17



## CHAPTER 2

### Review of Macmurray's General Philosophical Stance

Macmurray is relatively unknown even within the world of established academic philosophers and is normally dismissed as an "eccentric Scot".<sup>1</sup> If Macmurray is referred to at all, he is mentioned as someone who represents a rare British link with existentialism.<sup>2</sup> However, Macmurray was influenced by many schools of philosophy other than existentialism. In fact Macmurray's tendency was to refer to general trends within the history of philosophy, such as the logical empiricists or the existentialists. Macmurray was influenced by, and dealt extensively with more than one school of thought or trend within philosophy; he tended to deal with fundamental presuppositions made by a certain school as opposed to individual thinkers.<sup>3</sup> Notwithstanding these habits, Macmurray was influenced by certain major thinkers. It must be emphasised that Macmurray cannot be placed in one particular or even general group of thinkers.

There are several general points about Macmurray's overall philosophical stance that should be established before trying to determine and identify the philosophical sources that influenced Macmurray's thinking. The most rudimentary and fundamental question must revolve around Macmurray's definition of philosophy and collaterally what essential qualities he identifies in theology.

Macmurray's definition of philosophy includes several basic propositions. Thomason has identified four basic motifs involved in Macmurray's thinking about the definition of philosophy, which

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1. Conford, Philip, "John Macmurray: a Neglected Philosopher" Radical Philosophy (Spring, 1977) No. 16 p. 16

2. Conford, op. cit., p.16

3. Kirkpatrick, Frank Gloyd. "The Idea of God in the Thought of John Macmurray: Its Basis and Some Implications" (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: Brown University, 1970) p.17

includes philosophy as an expression of social consciousness; philosophy as an attempt to discover and know reality; philosophy as wisdom and philosophy as theology.<sup>4</sup> Macmurray's understanding of philosophy revolves around two pivots: firstly that philosophy is "the logical analysis of ideas and their systematic inter-relation and coherence" which is termed the "essence of philosophy"<sup>5</sup>; secondly that philosophy is "reflection upon experience".<sup>6</sup> Macmurray in an early work defined philosophy as "the attempt to understand the meaning of human experience in the world."<sup>7</sup> Philosophy assumes that one makes an effort to understand. These two underlying propositions combine to form Macmurray's definition of philosophy. "Philosophy, then, is the attempt to express the infinite in immediate experience through reflection. It would be equally correct to say that it is the attempt to express reality. For reality is essentially the concrete wholeness which characterises immediate experience."<sup>8</sup> Macmurray broadened his definition of philosophy by maintaining that: "It is reflection in search of an understanding of the wholeness of immediate experience, not of partial and isolated aspects of it."<sup>9</sup> Philosophy is a logical schema of thought for

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4. Thomason, William Paul, "The Empirical Basis for Religion in Macmurray's Philosophy" (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1972) p.17

5. Macmurray, John, "The Inaugural Address: Concerning the History of Philosophy" PAS Supp. Vol. XXV Freedom, Language and Reality (1951) p.12 hereafter cited as CHP.

6. IU p.11

7. FMW p.106

8. IU pp. 33-34

9. IU p. 34

Macmurray that is both "concrete and comprehensive."<sup>10</sup>

A very important aspect of Macmurray's understand of philosophy is his identification of philosophy with theology.<sup>11</sup> One might even go so far as to hold that Macmurray's philosophy can be considered to be the development of a theological position.<sup>12</sup> Philosophy is for Macmurray the intellectual reflective mode of the "religious life" in opposition to mysticism as the emotional reflective mode of the "religious life".<sup>13</sup> Macmurray stated simply that: "Philosophy is theology".<sup>14</sup> Macmurray criticised post-Renaissance philosophy for differentiating itself from theology.<sup>15</sup> In order for philosophy to be theology in the proper manner, philosophy must work towards greater 'community-friendship' in a properly empirical way, i.e. it must work for the Christian goal of love.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, philosophy if correctly understood must be seen in terms of theology which in turn is dependent upon the concept of community, which illustrates the central position that the concept of community plays in the work of Macmurray.

A basic characteristic of Macmurray's style, when referring to philosophical influences, is one of making reference to trends and concepts as opposed to individual thinkers. An excellent example

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10. Macmurray, John, "The Unity of Modern Problems" Journal of Philosophical Studies IV:14 (April, 1929) p.162

11. Nephew, Albert Henry II "Philosophy is Theology: The Nature and Function of Philosophy According to John Macmurray" (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: Marquette University, 1970) p.13

12. White, L.J. "John Macmurray: Theology as Philosophy" Scottish Journal of Theology (Nov. 1973) No. 26 p.449

13. Macmurray, John "What is Philosophy" PAS Suppl. Vol. XI Phenomenology Goodness and Beauty (1932) p.65 cited hereafter as WP.

14. WP p.65

15. WP p.66

16. Nephew, op. cit, p.162

of this type of thinking, which is found throughout Macmurray's work, is his understanding of modern philosophy. Macmurray conceived of modern philosophy as having been distinguished by two distinct phases before entering into a third phase. The first distinct phase of modern philosophy according to Macmurray runs from Descartes to Hume,<sup>17</sup> which was the stage of formal rationalism.<sup>18</sup> The second stage runs from Rousseau through the German idealists<sup>19</sup> with Kant standing somewhere ambiguously in between the two phases.<sup>20</sup> The primary concept in the second phase of modern philosophy was organism as opposed to the "substance" of the first phase.<sup>21</sup> The emerging third phase is seen as a reaction against the inadequacies of the organic analogy of the second phase.<sup>22</sup> This type of treatment of modern philosophy is to be found throughout Macmurray's work and it also acts as a basis for his epistemology in The Self as Agent.<sup>23</sup> The underlying assumption upon which this analysis was based was that there are three fundamental groupings of science, i.e. physical, biological, and psychological.

Macmurray's work owes something to a great many different groups which includes the Christians, Marxists, existentialists, psychologists and anthropologists.<sup>24</sup> However, he was not a follower of any

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17. Kirkpatrick, op. cit., p.19

18. Thomason, op. cit., p.33

19. Kirkpatrick, op. cit., p.19

20. SA p.32

21. Thomason, op. cit., p.35

22. Ibid p.37

23. Ibid p.31

24. Conford, op. cit., p.20

particular thinker or group of thinkers, but produced a system of his own. However, there are two thinkers that stand head and shoulders above the other thinkers that appear in Macmurray's work. These two thinkers are Kant and Marx.

Without doubt the thought of Immanuel Kant is seminal to the thought of John Macmurray. The new philosophical form which Macmurray wished to introduce, i.e. "the form of the personal" is introduced through an analysis of Kant's understanding of the relation between the theoretical and the practical aspects of the self.<sup>25</sup> Macmurray held that the Critical philosophy of Immanuel Kant was the "most adequate of modern philosophies..."<sup>26</sup> which Macmurray treated as the best representative of modern philosophy. Macmurray constantly used Kant's thought as a springboard from which he leaped into unexplored and untraditional territory. Macmurray regarded Kant as one of the great philosophers and Macmurray stated that Kant was "the greatest of our European moralists".<sup>27</sup> Macmurray utilised Kant's thinking as a starting point when analysing the problems that are generated by modern philosophy. An example of Macmurray's involvement with Kantian thinking is his acceptance that Kant produced a Copernican revolution<sup>28</sup> in philosophy by proposing the reversal of the relation of subject and object which makes the object dependent on the subject, i.e. knowledge depends on the categories of the mind of the knower. Macmurray proposed not a reversal of subject and object, but of subject and agent, i.e. of knower and doer. Macmurray takes the self primarily as a doer of actions and

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25. Kirkpatrick, op. cit., p.120

26. SPA p.39

27. RE p.124

28. SA p.85

only secondarily as a knower, which changes one from an egocentric orientation to a heterocentric orientation.<sup>29</sup>

Kant was for Macmurray an important pioneer, who represented the apex between the mechanistic and organic types of philosophy,<sup>30</sup> which make up the two basic modes of apperception that Macmurray wished to supplant in favour of the personal mode of apperception, i.e. the interpersonal or relational conception of the world. Macmurray analysed Kant in terms of Kant's response to the development of Romanticism and the Faith philosophy—the philosophy of his contemporaries Hamann and Herder—which Kant believed to have dangerous implications.<sup>31</sup> Macmurray's view is that Kant can be seen only clearly within the historical context of his admiration of Romanticism and his reaction against Faith philosophy, which is opposed to the normal view that Kant was dealing with certain epistemological problems.<sup>32</sup> Macmurray appreciated that Kant was one of the "band of pioneers who created the Romantic movement in Germany."<sup>33</sup>

Nevertheless, Macmurray did not unreservedly follow Kant, but he made use of Kant as a stepping off point or springboard. Macmurray criticised Kant's system for not adequately doing justice to the religious aspect of human experience.<sup>34</sup> Kant according to Macmurray,

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29. Nephew, op. cit., p. 120

30. Conford, op. cit., p. 16

31. Ibid

32. Ibid

33. BS p. 74

34. Bozzo, Edward George, "Toward a Renewed Fundamental Moral Theology: The Implications of the Thought of John Macmurray for Christian Ethics" (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: Catholic University of America, 1979) pp. 73-74



slighted religion and based religion upon moral experience. Macmurray, however, reasoned that religious experience was the basis of moral experience. Macmurray identified Kant's failure with his initial assumption of "I think" which automatically debars the second person and makes the relation impossible. God is the second person for each individual in the 'I-Thou' equation. The religious experience according to Macmurray is based upon the distinction between the first and second person. The idea of God is the idea of the universal second person pronoun, i.e. the "universal 'Thou' to which all particular persons stand in personal relation."<sup>35</sup>

The second major criticism of Kant's philosophical system by Macmurray was that it is radically incoherent in its method of relating theoretical or reflective activities to practical or pragmatic activities.<sup>36</sup> Macmurray proposed to follow the Kant of practical reason. Kant is inconsistent according to Macmurray because of his failure to insist upon the primacy of practical reason.<sup>37</sup> This choice to follow the Kant of practical reason is more radical than such a statement would at first seem to imply, for it means that Macmurray's concern is not with the problems of dualist philosophy, but with the problem of dualistic philosophy itself, i.e. the separation of mind and matter. Macmurray's interpretation of Kant is that Kant "concluded that reason is primarily practical; not primarily, that is to say, the capacity

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35. SA p.72

36. Bozzo, op. cit., p.77; SA p.63, 67-68; Kirkpatrick, op. cit., p.29, 40

37. Langford, Thomas, "The Natural Theology of John Macmurray" Canadian Journal of Theology, (1966) XII pp.9-10



to think in terms of distinction between 'true' and 'false' but to act in terms of a distinction between 'right' and 'wrong'." <sup>38</sup>

Macmurray's basic assumptions, that action is primary and that religious experience is a matter of the relations between I and thou, both come from his reaction to and dialogue with Kant. Thematically the 'I-Thou' philosophy which lies at the very centre of Macmurray's work, originates in the transcendental philosophy of Kant. <sup>39</sup> Throughout Macmurray's Gifford Lectures, which is the major philosophical work of Macmurray, one clearly hears echoes of the Kantian basis of Macmurray's thinking, both in his agreement with Kant and his reaction to Kant's thinking. <sup>40</sup>

While Kant was to the forefront of Macmurray's thought during his later years, Marx was to the forefront of Macmurray's early work. Marx is the only other major individual philosophical influence that can be seen consistently affecting and influencing the thought of Macmurray. Not long after the First World War Macmurray was invited to a conference which lead him to undertake a thorough study of Marx's early writings in an attempt to discover the relation between Marxism and the Christian tradition. <sup>41</sup> Macmurray agreed with the presupposition of the conference that the study of "communism was a necessary prelude to the understanding of Christianity." <sup>42</sup> Macmurray was convinced by Marxism that: "idealism is a dangerous illusion which must be rejected." <sup>43</sup> However,

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38. SA p.80

39. Bozzo, op. cit., p.78

40. Langford, op. cit., p.20; SA p.171; PR p.208

41. Conford, op. cit., p.16

42. SRR p.25

43. SRR p.26

Macmurray was "not convinced that religion is necessarily a form of idealism."<sup>44</sup> This led Macmurray to conclude that the basic error of Marxism was the identification of idealism and religion. "Marx would have been justified in calling for the reform of religion but not for its rejection."<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, the influence of the early works of Marx was a considerable influence on the philosophy of Macmurray in particular in his analysis of the relation between theory and practice.<sup>46</sup>

The theories of Marx struck a responsive chord in Macmurray and throughout the 1930's Macmurray wrote many books and articles<sup>47</sup> in which he praised some of the doctrines of Marx, which he thought to be of value, while criticising and revising other doctrines.<sup>48</sup>

One of Macmurray's main preoccupations during the 1930's was a synthesis of Marxism and Christianity; a preoccupation that is to be found in the work of other thinkers, during the same period; an example is Reinhold Niebuhr. However, it must be emphasised that Macmurray did not 'convert' to Marxism and slavishly follow the 'party line'. Macmurray never identified himself as a Marxist, but he enthusiastically held some of the more important doctrines to be true, and called for a Marxist approach to economic problems.<sup>49</sup> However, during Macmurray's later work there is a marked decline in his involvement with Marxist thinking. It is however, clearly

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44. SRR p.26

45. SRR p.26

46. Conford, op. cit., p.16

47. CS and PC

48. Nephew, op. cit., p.48

49. Ibid, p.49

apparent that Macmurray saw the synthesis of Marxism and Christianity to be an early objective and saw Marxism and Christianity as being interwoven. Macmurray held that: "within the religion of Jesus there is to be found the original, though forgotten source of the main principle of communism."<sup>50</sup>

Macmurray held that Marx saw personal reality as "essentially social, that it is the reality of personal relationships in society, and further, that what determines the relation to persons in society is the economic reality which they face."<sup>51</sup> Macmurray agreed with this assumption and went on to point out that the fall of Sabbatarianism in Scotland has shown how the economic situation is the final court of appeal in determining man's freedom from restrictive ideas.<sup>52</sup> Macmurray agreed with the Socialist assertion of faith in "freedom and equality".<sup>53</sup> Macmurray held that: "The way to freedom lies through the control of economic necessity by the development of man's power over nature."<sup>54</sup> Throughout Macmurray's work the concept of freedom was one of the major themes and goals.

In his review of Marxist principles Macmurray underlined the Marxist assumption that: "as a matter of fact theory and practice are inseparably bound up."<sup>55</sup> Macmurray asserted that there is a unity between theory and practice, which is a conception that permeates his work. Another point of importance for Macmurray was the Marxist understanding of society as "not merely the relation of

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50. CS p.90

51. PC p.30

52. PC pp.30-31

53. Coates, J.B., Ten Modern Prophets (London: Fredrick Muller, Ltd., 1944), p.188

54. PC p.30

55. PC p.36

persons", but as a "process of change".<sup>56</sup> Thus early in Macmurray's writings one finds two of his basic assumptions which originated from his study of Marx, i.e. the unity of action and thought as well as the view of society as a relational process that is struggling towards a goal, which for the Marxist is the struggle for the control of the means of production.<sup>57</sup>

Macmurray was certainly influenced by Marx. Coates in his summary of Macmurray's thought attributes to Macmurray certain Marxist attributes one of which is the use of the dialectical method of thinking. Coates opined that the main attraction of Marx for Macmurray was Marx's attempt to unify thought and action.<sup>58</sup> Thomason on the other hand holds that the significance of Marx for Macmurray was to be found in his recognition of the fact that every philosophy owed its characteristics to the social conditions from which it arose.<sup>59</sup> This in turn meant that any claim for universality by philosophy is false.<sup>60</sup>

This is not to say that Macmurray is in total agreement with Marx. There are a number of serious criticisms that are levelled at Marx by Macmurray. Macmurray's criticisms revolved around Marx truncated conception of religion, which included the opinion that

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56. PC p.45

57. PC p.55

58. Coates, op. cit., p.111

59. Thomason p.22, also Macmurray, John, "Dialectical Materialism as a Philosophy" Aspects of Dialectical Materialism ed. H Levy (London: Watts & Co., 1934), pp 32-33 also FMW pp 68-70

60. Thomason, op. cit., p.23

Christianity in its blind devotion to ideals become illusory.<sup>61</sup>

The main criticism of Macmurray is that Marx did not research into the social nature of religion and consequently he made the false assumption that religion is necessarily idealistic.<sup>62</sup> Macmurray rejected out of hand the Marxist assumption that religion is in essence idealistic. Speaking of the religion which is to be found in the Old Testament Macmurray pointed out that: "For that religion at least is not idealistic in Marx's sense, but materialist. It shows no interest in any other world, but is entirely concerned with the right way to maintain human community in this world."<sup>63</sup>

The second major criticism of the Marxist approach by Macmurray is that it overlooks the eternal factor and concentrates upon the temporal factor. The factor that Marx's theory overlooks is the conditioning of progress in the "temporal process by the external factor which religion recognises".<sup>64</sup> The Marxist only finds the significance of life in the process of social development. This social development for the Marxist is completely dominated by the economic factor. However, this is only the temporal aspect of human relationships according to Macmurray. Another aspect of human relationships is what Macmurray called the eternal aspect of society, which is the personal communion between persons, i.e. the communal or interpersonal as opposed to the economic aspect of human social development.<sup>65</sup>

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61. Lam, Elizabeth P., "Does Macmurray Understand Marx?"  
The Journal of Religion, XX, No.1 (1940), p.52

62. Conford, op. cit., p.18

63. PR pp.153-154

64. CS p.155

65. Coates, op. cit., pp.111-112

Macmurray's reaction to Marx varies in his works, but in his early works Macmurray considered Marx to be the true heir of the Christian tradition.<sup>66</sup> However, Macmurray's attempted synthesis of Marxism and Christianity is suspect since Macmurray did not deal to any great extent with fundamental Marxist ideas. Such fundamental and essential Marxist ideas as the antagonistic and compulsive elements of the social structure; the interpretation of history in terms of class conflict; and the necessity of overthrowing the capitalistic system to establish a society free of class conflict and economic exploitation by the proletariat are not to be found in Macmurray's synthesis of Christianity and Marxism.<sup>67</sup> In fact some of these ideas are at odds with Macmurray's understanding of society and community. However, the assumption that philosophical and theological problems can be understood better within a sociological context must lead back to the encounter that Macmurray had with Marx.

Macmurray's treatment of Marx was a mere lifting out of Marx's total system "his objectives and his opposition to theism",<sup>68</sup> which were treated as the entire basis of the problem between Christianity and Marxism. Macmurray in fact is in direct conflict with certain of Marx's fundamental assumptions. Macmurray's consistent emphasis upon the degree of co-operation within community which actually exists in social relationships is in direct disagreement with Marx's stress upon the antagonistic elements in society.<sup>69</sup>

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66. Lam, op. cit., p.51

67. Ibid pp.51-52

68. Ibid p.63

69. Ibid p.64



The essential disagreement and incompatibility of Marx's thought and Macmurray's thought is clearly shown when one realises that Marx looked for a sudden change in society, while Macmurray was writing in the hope of a gradual change. Marxism certainly had some affect upon Macmurray's fundamental understanding of philosophy, but he did not really borrow anything of lasting value from Marx beyond his interest in the unity of theory and practice and the social aspects of philosophy and knowledge.

Although Macmurray was influenced by the thought of several philosophers, he cannot be placed in any particular school of philosophy. Macmurray has connections with such diverse schools of thought as empiricism,<sup>70</sup> existentialism<sup>71</sup> and pragmatism,<sup>72</sup> and he found areas of agreement within each of these opposing modes of philosophy. Macmurray agreed with and applauded the strong stand of logical empiricism and existentialism against the main stream of traditional philosophy. Macmurray opined that: "These two contemporary forms of philosophy, logical empiricism and existentialism, represent, it would seem, opposite reactions to the breakdown of the tradition."<sup>73</sup> Both of these contemporary forms of philosophy are united in their extreme differences in that they both rest upon "the decision that the traditional method of philosophy is incapable of solving its traditional problems."<sup>74</sup>

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70. Thomason, op. cit., p.79

71. Jung, Hwa Yol, "The Logic of the Personal: John Macmurray and the Ancient Hebrew View of Life" Personalist, XLVII, p.544

72. Thomason, op. cit., p.79

73. SA p.27

74. SA p.27

Macmurray summarised the two positions when he noted that: "the logical empiricists discard the problem in order to maintain the method, the existentialists relinquish the method in wrestling with the problem."<sup>75</sup> Macmurray summarised his estimate of the two emerging philosophical schools by stating that: "Existentialism has discovered, with sensitiveness of feeling, that the philosophical problem of the present lies in a crisis of the personal: logical empiricism recognises it as a crisis of logical form and method. Both are correct, and both are one-sided."<sup>76</sup> Macmurray considered the crisis to be a personal one, but the problem it presents to philosophy is a formal one. Therefore, the problem for Macmurray is a combination of the logical and personal. The problem "is to discover or to construct the intellectual form of the personal".<sup>77</sup>

One can easily see that to place Macmurray into any one category of philosophy would be hopeless, but it is helpful to point out and summarise Macmurray's connection with certain schools of thought. It is beyond doubt that Macmurray does exhibit certain links with empiricism as well as existentialism. Macmurray's link with empiricism is clearly seen in his treatment of experience. Macmurray assumed like the classical empiricist Locke that experience both direct and indirect was the source of all knowledge.<sup>78</sup> The mind needs something to work upon and that thing worked upon is the given of experience.<sup>79</sup> All knowledge is derived from the

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75. SA p.27

76. SA p.29

77. SA p.29

78. Thomason, op. cit., pp.89-90; SRE p.15

79. Thomason, op. cit., p.90



"ordinary data of universal human experience".<sup>80</sup> Some have argued that Macmurray should be interpreted in terms of the empirical philosophical outlook. Macmurray has two important connections with empiricism in that he held that experience is the ultimate source of knowledge and that sensation is an important element in experience.<sup>81</sup> It has been also argued that Macmurray's epistemology of agency, which is his reference of knowing and all its functions to action which itself is practical experience, is an empirical epistemology.<sup>82</sup> However, such a view is limited since Macmurray realised that such unalloyed empiricism leads to scepticism, which led Macmurray to renounce the limitations of sensation.<sup>83</sup> However, there are certainly reductionist tendencies in the work of Macmurray which can be directly traced to the empirical side of his thinking. It is beyond doubt that Macmurray eschewed the scepticism of empiricism and its adherence to sensation. Macmurray's analysis of action and human activities provided for him a way of speaking meaningfully about religion and ethics.<sup>84</sup>

It is of great significance that Macmurray gave his most explicit expression of his empirical assumptions in The Structure of Religious Experience, which is a work that is concerned with the nature of religious experience.<sup>85</sup> The reductionist and empiricist side of Macmurray's thinking comes out most clearly when Macmurray is dealing with religion. Macmurray in his search for a scientifically acceptable view of religion defines religion in terms of the

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80. SRA p.15

81. Thomason, op. cit., p.156

82. Ibid, p.157

83. Ibid, p.158

84. Ibid,

85. Ibid, p.91

community and friendship, which provides a concrete set of experiences that can be defined as religious. Friendship, i.e. the 'I-Thou' relationship, and community become the empirical basis of religion.<sup>86</sup>

Macmurray certainly approved of logical empiricism's shift from sensation to action. Macmurray applauded logical empiricism's shifting of the focus of logical analysis, "from thought to language" which avoided the false dualism of mind and body introduced by Descartes "I Think" by substituting "I say" for "I Think".<sup>87</sup> The logical structure of importance for philosophy becomes language, which introduces the concept of You and I, not just the I of "I Think". Thus for Macmurray "the problem of the form of the personal emerges as the problem of the form of communication."<sup>88</sup> On the other hand, Macmurray approves of existentialism since it is concerned with the problems of personal experience in its personal character, which also exhibits the emergence of a religious solution to certain philosophical problems.<sup>89</sup>

Macmurray certainly agreed with certain logical empiricist assumptions, but he also exhibited existential leanings. Macmurray compared his own story with that of Kierkegaard the father of existentialism in his autobiographical work The Search for Reality in Religion, which is itself reminiscent of Kierkegaard's own works. Others have argued that Macmurray's "exegesis of the personal based on primacy of action is an expression of the distaste for 'a speculative conundrum' which has been too common in philosophising",

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86. Nephew, op. cit., p.156

87. SA p.74

88. SA p.74

89. SA 9.74

which is "not unlike Soren Kierkegaard".<sup>90</sup>

Macmurray certainly approved of Kierkegaard's, as well as Comte's rejection, of the organic approach to philosophy.<sup>91</sup>

Macmurray noted with approval Kierkegaard's scepticism about the organic analogy of the self.<sup>92</sup> Like Kierkegaard before him,

Macmurray wrote a great deal about the problems of religion.

However, Macmurray was neither an existentialist nor an empiricist.

Macmurray was influenced by many other thinkers. Some such as Buber have had an early and an on-going and deep influence upon Macmurray.<sup>93</sup> Buber's concept of 'the dialogical' is in close harmony with Macmurray's concept of the "personal". Both thinkers saw the essence of human beings in the 'I-Thou' relation since for both there is no reality without sharing.<sup>94</sup> The Kantian background of Macmurray's thought fits closely with the 'I-Thou' philosophy of Buber with its roots in the transcendental philosophy of Kant.<sup>95</sup>

Another philosopher whose thought affected that of Macmurray is that of Feuerbach, which dates from Macmurray's encounter with Marx.<sup>96</sup> Macmurray was also influenced to a lesser degree by such thinkers as Bergson,<sup>97</sup> Durkheim,<sup>98</sup> and as some argue the pragmatism of Pierce, Dewey,<sup>99</sup> and James.<sup>100</sup>

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90. Jung, op. cit. , p.544

91. Conford, op. cit., p.78

92. SA p.82

93. SRR p.24

94. Jung, op. cit., pp.537-538

95. Bozzo, op. cit., p.78

96. PC

97. Coates, op. cit., p.101

98. White, op. cit., p.452

99. Thomason, op. cit., p.157

100. Langford, op. cit., p.10

Macmurray's own thought owes something to Kant, Marx, Existentialism, Empiricism, Personalism and several other schools of thought. Nevertheless, it is impossible for Macmurray to be accurately placed within any one group of thinkers or even within several groups of thinkers. John Macquarrie wrote that Macmurray "stands apart from the main stream of British philosophy ..."<sup>101</sup> Moreover, one might go so far as to say that Macmurray stands apart from the main stream of philosophy, but with roots going back to several major schools of thought.

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101. Macquarrie, John. Twentieth Century Religious Thought  
(London: SCM Press Ltd., 1963) p.206

PART II

General Review of Macmurray's  
Approach with Special Reference  
to His Concept of Religion .

CHAPTER 3

Religion, Art and Science

The basic goal of this introduction to Macmurray's work will be to review the general approach and assumptions that Macmurray utilises. The secondary goal will be to investigate Macmurray's understanding of religion, which is central to Macmurray's thinking. Macmurray understood the term 'religion' as a dimension of human nature or experience that can be compared to two other areas of human experience. The three areas of experience, which are also called areas of cognition, reflection or activity, are the categories of science, art and religion. These three modes of apprehension appear throughout Macmurray's work in many forms, and are represented in philosophy by the organic, mechanical and personal approaches to the problems of philosophy. Macmurray began several of his works<sup>1</sup> by analysing the structure of human experience, and in doing so Macmurray distinguished between the three types of attitude which are different modes of activity and reflection<sup>2</sup>. Macmurray considered all three categories to be interwoven and interdependent, but placed religion at the very centre. "Religion, in the sense in which it deserves consideration, is one of the three general expressions of rationality. The other two are art and science."<sup>3</sup> The central position of religion is underlined when speaking of all three general expressions of rationality. Macmurray asserted that: "of the three religion is the basic expression and the most comprehensive. The others are more abstract and in a special sense included within religion."<sup>4</sup>

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1. RAS and SRE

2. Hoffman, J.C. "Religion and Religious Experience in the Thought of John Macmurray: A Critique" Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses, p.2

3. RE p.195

4. RE p.195

In the early work The Structure of Religious Experience

Macmurray pointed out that there are three attitudes that are empirical in character. These are artistic empiricism, scientific empiricism and religious empiricism; the first two of which are "partial empiricisms",<sup>5</sup> since both of these areas presuppose but cannot deal with the group of facts which concern the mutual relationship which is at the centre of the religious field.<sup>6</sup> Macmurray asseverated that: "religious empiricism provides the synthesis of the opposite and partial attitudes of art and science..."<sup>7</sup>

Macmurray saw the synthesis of religion not to be only central but necessary. Religion is necessary since the two partial empirical modes art and science are in opposition which causes not only confusion but polarisation. "Cut loose from their unity in religion the two partial empiricisms (art and science) oppose one another and produce an antagonism in the field of social activity which is destructive of order, freedom and progress."<sup>8</sup> This theme of opposition and synthesis reappears in one of Macmurray's last works Persons in Relation, which underlines the continuing and central interpretation of religion in terms of the opposition of art and science and the synthetic character of religion. "Religion, we might say, intends the synthesis of art and science; art and science each intend themselves and exclude one another."<sup>9</sup>

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5. SRE p.13

6. SRE p.13

7. SRE p.14

8. SRE p.14

9. PR p.176

Another significant insight has to do with the common ground of the three modes of reflection or attitudes. Macmurray realised that the whole field of experience encompasses the total accumulation of data within which science, art and religion have their beginnings. Each of these fields deals with the common set of experience differently because of a difference in attitude as well as a difference in direction. When seen in terms of attitude "the religious man comes to worship, the artist to admire, the scientist to observe".<sup>10</sup> Macmurray declared that: "They all come to the same world of common fact."<sup>11</sup> This fact underlines not only the common aspects of all experiences, but the single centre of these fields of reflection. "The same person may be at once religious, artistic, and scientific. The three attitudes of mind which we have distinguished can alternate in one and the same mind."<sup>12</sup> However, there are within the general area of experience three separate attitudes each of which concentrates upon a certain group of facts. Macmurray pragmatically acknowledged that: "we find in practice there are three fields which overlap to a considerable extent but which have distinct centres. It is as if the same field of general experience became organised in three different ways around three different centres of interest."<sup>13</sup>

For Macmurray the three general fields or modes of thinking are intimately connected. They share the common ground of experience as well as the same mind. However, these are three distinct areas that

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10. SRE p.21

11. SRE p.22

12. SRE pp.22-23

13. RAS p.7



centre upon three different loci. These three attitudes do interact and support each other, but the mode of religious reflection or attitude is the central synthesising mode.

In order to more fully understand what is meant by the three modes of reflection it will be necessary to investigate all three modes separately. However, the purpose and centre of such an investigation is, as Macmurray pointed out, a comprehensive understanding of religion and its connection with other ways of thinking. "The treatment of art and science will, of course, be designed to throw light upon the character of religion."<sup>14</sup> Macmurray distinguished between the two separate modes or attitudes apart from the one that he labelled the religious mode. Macmurray characterised these two modes of reflection in many different ways. The most common labels applied to the scientific attitude are practical, pragmatic or mechanical. The second mode is commonly labelled as contemplative, organic, or aesthetic. Macmurray did not stress any particular name, since he pointed out that they are simply terms "to call attention to the fact that they are the two attitudes which define the field of science and the field of art respectively by the different valuation which they impose upon experience to organise it."<sup>15</sup>

One of the basic reasons for Macmurray's investigation of the fields of art and science is because of the ever present possibility of religion being confused with them. Macmurray wished to investigate what he termed the "geography of human life"<sup>16</sup> by which he meant looking at the primary reflective activities which are art and science as well as religion.

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14. SRE p.29

15. SRE p.30

16. RAS p.8

The religious mode is the primary mode and the modes of art and science are derived from the primary mode of reflection by the limitation of attention. All of these modes of reflection are taken from the one area of practical expression.<sup>17</sup> However, there are several things that art and science have in common with religion even though they are limited in terms of orientation as well as method. Religion intends the synthesis of art and science whereas art and science each intend only themselves and exclude one another.<sup>18</sup> Macmurray recognised that there was polarisation between the two non-religious modes and he concluded that: "art intends the determination of the possible, not of the actual... Science intends the determination of the actual, not the possible."<sup>19</sup> Macmurray underlined the polarisation of art and science in their intention, which "is in Science intellectual, and therefore factual; in art it is emotional and evaluative."<sup>20</sup>

However, art and science have things in common, for example, both are objective in their reflection, but art is valuational in its objectivity, whereas science is descriptive in its objectivity. Since both art and science draw from the same overall pool of data, which is the whole of experience in the world, they are both, not unexpectedly, somewhat similar in their approach to this data. Macmurray stated that:

Both demand an intense and impersonal concentration upon the world. Both have their interest fixed upon the other, not the self. Both extend our knowledge of the world, though in different fashion, and of the two kinds of knowledge it is that yielded by the insight of the artist that is more important.<sup>21</sup>

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17. SA p.188

18. PR p.176

19. PR p.176

20. PR p.177

21. PR p.181

There was quite evidently in Macmurray's mind a good deal of overlap in these two opposing fields of reflection. Therefore, Macmurray recognised the opposing intentions of science and art; while also realising the mutual factors in both fields. Macmurray commented that: "both art and science are, as a matter of fact personal activities",<sup>22</sup> and that "artist and scientist alike are doing something and the unity of the personal informs the doing."<sup>23</sup>

Macmurray recognised the antagonistic elements that exist between science and art as well as the mutual elements. When Macmurray compared these two attitudes, he came to the conclusion that of the two abstract forms of rationality, "the aesthetic is primary, the scientific is secondary and subordinate."<sup>24</sup> When science refers to action it refers only to means; art, on the other hand, refers to the end of action which includes the means to the end.<sup>25</sup> Another means of comparison is the way in which art and science approach an object. Artistic consciousness of an object which Macmurray termed "knowledge proper" is distinct from the understanding of or information about the object, which is all that science can offer us. Macmurray's conclusion is that: "The artistic attitude alone enables us to come into contact with the reality of things, to realise the individuality, the value of actual objects, actual people.

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22. PR p.177

23. PR p.177

24. PR p.177

25. PR p.177

26. PR p.177

For science things exist only in terms of something else."<sup>27</sup> In general Macmurray differentiated between the two solitary modes of reflection by arguing that: "the value of science is utility-value, while the value of art is intrinsic."<sup>28</sup>

#### The Scientific Mode of Apperception

The first mode of reflection that will be investigated is the scientific or pragmatic mode of reflection. Macmurray assumed that the scientific mode of reflection is the most complete.<sup>29</sup> In fact, this makes the investigation of science the simplest of the three investigations. Macmurray posited that:

once science is established in the psychological field, it is in principle complete. There is no further field to which it could be extended. The groupings of the sciences into physical, biological and psychological covers the whole field of phenomena. The philosopher therefore, is at last presented with a science which is in principle complete, for his examination and evaluation.<sup>30</sup>

Scientific reflection is also termed intellectual reflection. Macmurray saw intellectual or scientific reflection as having a universalising function,<sup>31</sup> and to be the determination of the 'world-as-means'. "It expresses itself, therefore, in a generalised representation of the world as matter of fact; in the production of formulae which express the recurrent patterns of continuance in experience."<sup>32</sup> When this is carried out in a systematic way for its own sake, this is what Macmurray terms science. In terms of action it provides "an

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27. RE p.155

28. RE p.155

29. Mooney, Philip. "The Notion of Religion in John Macmurray"  
(Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: Fordham University,  
1972) pp.27-28

30. BS p.33

31. RE p.154

32. SA p.198

improvement in our technical knowledge, in particular by the great extension of anticipation which it makes possible."<sup>33</sup> The on-going task of science by "means of systematic intellectual reflection and its expression in generalized information" is to discover what "we may count on, with greater or less probability..., as the support for our actions or as the means to the realisation of our intention."<sup>34</sup>

Two basic themes in Macmurray's discussion of science or the intellectual mode of reflection is the utility value of science and the generalising tendency of the intellectual mode. Both of these themes appear early in the work of Macmurray. Macmurray in The Structure of Religious Experience declared that: "The scientific attitude of approaching all data of experience with the feeling that things are for use, sees the world as consisting of different stuffs that can be used for different purposes."<sup>35</sup> The other recurrent theme is that: "What is noticeable in the progression of this scientific picture is that it moves always away from individuality towards an undistinguishable commonness. The artistic attitude, in reflection, moves in the opposite direction towards individuality and uniqueness."<sup>36</sup> Macmurray not only underlined the generalising tendency of science but he also indicated that: "The effect of science is to emphasise and accelerate change."<sup>37</sup>

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33. SA p.198

34. SA p.198

35. SRE p.30

36. SRE pp.30-31

37. SRE p.31

The idea of science as change is again evident in another form; the continuous change that science brings about comes under closer scrutiny since there is obvious danger in the intentions behind the change. "Science provides that kind of knowledge which can form the basis for technology: that is to say, for the provision of techniques for the achievement of intentions."<sup>38</sup> The major objection that Macmurray raised is that: "science increases the range of our power. But it is indifferent as regards the objectives of action."<sup>39</sup> Science presupposes intentions, but does not evaluate them. Therefore, as a dimension of action "scientific knowledge is the negative aspect of technology, that is to say, of actions regarded as means."<sup>40</sup> The function of science for the community is its technological aspect, but it fails to provide guidance about the way in which the techniques should be utilised as well as a clear understanding of the outcome of the utilisation of these techniques. Science provides the means without providing the technique for understanding the ends. Science is in some ways incomplete; in fact incomplete in a dangerous way.

The tendency of science to generalise is a strong and continuous theme in Macmurray's work. Macmurray defined science as the "knowledge of the other as means", and also pointed out that: "This knowledge it represents as a universal system of laws of Nature, which forms the theoretical basis for all possible techniques."<sup>41</sup>

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38. PR p.182

39. PR p.182

40. PR p.182

41. PR p.184



An interesting and exhaustive study of science as a mode of reflection is to be found in Religion, Art and Science in which Macmurray amplified the characteristics and limitations of science. The first of these is the limitation that science imposes on itself in the form of concerning itself only "with matter of fact".<sup>42</sup> This is limiting since this presupposes the exclusion of the determination of value. The second limit of science that Macmurray mentioned is "the search for valid generalisation", which "is of the essence of scientific enquiry".<sup>43</sup> This means that the scientist is not interested in particular things, or particular events. The scientist is in search of constants, i.e. patterns of things which repeat themselves without change indefinitely. Macmurray argued that: "The concentration of science on what is general or, at the limit, universal, is itself an exclusion, as any concentration of interest must be."<sup>44</sup> For Macmurray science is limited to the general and constant which means that it does not try to provide knowledge of the particular since it ignores the individual as an individual.

For Macmurray science is an activity, since all reflection is connected with action. He expresses his belief that: "scientific knowledge is instrumental knowledge; it is the kind of knowledge which provides the basis of technological advance."<sup>45</sup> Science is a practical activity that looks to the world outside ourselves to the material that nature provides for the solution of technical problems, which means that people and things are considered to be instruments for our purpose. One concentrates upon the means of

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42. RAS p.11

43. RAS p.12

44. RAS pp.13-14

45. RAS p.15

achieving the ends, while the ends themselves are fixed;<sup>46</sup> which is a return from a different perspective to the problem of the failure of science to concentrate upon ends as well as means.

In Macmurray's discussion of the scientific attitude, he noted that the common term used to express this attitude is "objectivity". The first component of the scientific attitude is an "interest in the external world for its own sake".<sup>47</sup> An older way of expressing this was as the "disinterested desire for truth".<sup>48</sup> Macmurray felt that there is a need to clearly denote this human capacity which is labelled "objectivity", when it is referred to in philosophical terms. Macmurray preferred "to refer to it as our capacity for self-transcendence".<sup>49</sup> In terms of the general idea of the limitation of science this component of the scientific attitude is also an indicator of limitation. "Thus on the subject side as well as the object side, science demands a limitation to the universal aspect of experience, and the exclusion of individuality."<sup>50</sup> Consequently, the scientific attitude is exclusively intellectual with the exclusion of emotion, which means that science, although motivated by certain emotional considerations, is a direct result of this emotional factor, but it "makes no difference to the result, since it remains the same whatever the result may be".<sup>51</sup> This means also an exclusion of the consideration of the ends, since without "emotional factors there can be no valuation".<sup>52</sup>

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46. RAS p.15

47. RAS p.17

48. RAS p.17

49. RAS p.18

50. RAS p.18

51. RAS p.18

52. RAS p.21



Hence science in Macmurray's mind is interested only in events, i.e. the things that are understood through their cause, and not in actions which are understood through their intentions.

Macmurray's basic objection to the scientific attitude is the fact that "scientific knowledge is instrumental knowledge".<sup>53</sup> This means that to the scientist the world is a means to an end. This provided the main argument for Macmurray's objection to total dependence upon the scientific attitude. Since technology is a means of achieving some end then the "end is the sake for which the action is done".<sup>54</sup> Therefore, the end dictates the instruments and techniques that will be used, which signifies that there is an inversion of the ends and means, i.e. means have become end. This is of course a serious issue which raises the possibility that power may become an end in itself; this comes about since it is possible to amass means such as money without deciding in advance the particular end to which it will be applied. There is also the fact that the desire for security provides a strong motive for the collection of generalised power. Macmurray believed that within any scientifically dominated society "one could expect to find that power is the effective end of social action".<sup>55</sup> There are two reasons for this. The first is to do with the continuous increase in the technical capacity which science creates. There is the exploitation of power simply because "it is possible, not because one has a good reason for doing it".<sup>56</sup> The

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53. RAS p.21

54. RAS p.22

55. RAS p.23

56. RAS p.23

second reason stems from the type of mentality which the admiration of science encourages. The technical mind dominates, which means that there is a spread of an "attitude to life which sees it as a series of problems to be solved, and for which all problems are technological, and what is needed for their solution is a 'scientific' approach untrammelled by traditional taboos".<sup>57</sup> This is a concentration of interest upon instrumental values which means a growing unawareness of and insensitiveness to intrinsic values. For Macmurray the main problem is that we begin to treat human beings "as means to our ends or as obstacles to our purposes".<sup>58</sup>

The practical, intellectual or scientific attitude for Macmurray is the world of the matter of fact, the world of the material with objects seen as means, i.e. instruments. Generalisation not individualisation is the reflective aim of the intellectual mode, with the utility aspect as the most important. The utility aspect of an object, be it human, animate, or inanimate, is the only feature to be considered. Macmurray found science the most limited reflective activity as well as the most dangerous, because of the narrowness of the view afforded to the scientist.

#### The Artistic Mode of Apperception

The second attitude to be considered is the artistic, aesthetic or contemplative mode of apperception. Macmurray in evaluating the scientific attitude had concluded that for science there is only the utility value of the object.<sup>59</sup> However, this type of assessment is

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57. RAS p.25

58. RAS p.25

59. SRE p.27

not the only type of assessment that is possible. Another approach is the attempt to "fill my mind with the object; to remember or to realise more fully the unique qualities which make me single it out as valuable in itself".<sup>60</sup> The value that the object has is intrinsic and consequently the attitude toward the object is contemplative or emotional as opposed to intellectual.

The contemplative mode of apperception is an extension, i.e. a fuller experience, since it unifies the experience of valuation with the apprehension of the matter of fact, keeping in mind that the experience of valuing something is a fuller experience than just the apprehension of the object.<sup>61</sup> Macmurray noted that our sense-perceptions are accompanied by our feelings and emotions, which indicates the falsity of separately dealing with reason and emotion; and the accompanying tendency to "separate them as incompatible opposites", which makes us talk as if "we could not think and feel at the same time".<sup>62</sup> From this comes certain incompatible aspects of the scientific and artistic forms of reflection. However, one can perceive and have feelings about the same object at the same time. Emotional reflection, i.e. that which is at odds with intellectual reflection is "about an object which is before the mind in its factual character, either in immediate perception or in memory, imagination or thought".<sup>63</sup> The activity of contemplation, therefore, includes not only the activity of feeling, but also presupposes the factual apprehension of an object as a locus of those feelings.

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60. SRE p.28

61. RAS p.36

62. RAS p.36

63. RAS p.36

The artistic mode of reflection which Macmurray called the mode of emotional reflection is rooted in the act of contemplation just as the mode of intellectual reflection is grounded in generalisation. The idea of contemplation is, therefore, central to any discussion of the artistic attitude or the field of emotional reflection. What is central for contemplation is not what can be utilised, "but what can be most joyfully contemplated and admired".<sup>64</sup> "Beauty is the name we give to that which makes anything good to contemplate in its concrete individuality. The artistic attitude, therefore, organises the data of experience in terms of beauty."<sup>65</sup> Macmurray's understanding of the emotional reflective activity revolves around his conception of beauty, and at a more basic level, his understanding of beauty centres upon two predominant points. One is the actuality of contemplation with the significant modifying factor of individuality as the second point of interest.

The process of contemplation is made up of several elements. The first element is to do with the act of sense-perception. This is quite different from the apprehension of or the observational use of the senses by science, which tends towards generalisation, but art looks at an object in terms of its being as an individual not as a member of a class of objects. The second element of contemplation is brought about by the fact that the artistic attitude is an emotional activity. This means that the reflective activity can be labelled emotional or contemplative. "The statement of liking or disliking is an expression of immediate emotional reaction to an object. The object acts, as it were, as a stimulus to my capacity

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64. SRE p.28

65. SRE pp.28-29

for feeling, and I react positively or negatively."<sup>66</sup> This is followed by the process of valuation which sees the transformation of the statement "I like it" to "It is good". Macmurray viewed this process as one in which "I get rid of the reference to my own experience and transcend myself. Instead of characterising me, my judgement characterises the object".<sup>67</sup> This means that once one is ready to enjoy the object and not to enjoy myself by means of the object then one is at the point of emotional self-transcendence.<sup>68</sup> This means "the activity of enjoyment is contemplation";<sup>69</sup> a particular enjoyment that is beyond the self.

Two elements have been stressed and these are the perceptual examination and the emotional transcendence. However, there is a third element in contemplation which is the "activity of constructive imagination".<sup>70</sup> This element of constructive imagination brings in the other major factor of the artistic attitude which is individuality. For example, "in the visual arts it is quite literally the construction of an image; and this image is the painting or sculpture".<sup>71</sup> However, this image is not a reproduction of the matter of fact, which is encroaching upon the field of intellectual reflection, but it is an appraisal. To appraise the object the artist must isolate the object from its relation to other things, which means eliminating the merely general element and enhancing the individuality of the object. This individualisation is central to Macmurray's understanding of the

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66. RAS p.37

67. RAS p.38

68. RAS p.38

69. SA p.199

70. RAS p.39

71. RAS p.39

construction of an adequate image. "Just as science generalises, so art individualises its object, and through this individualising presents it (the object) as a self-existing entity, complete in itself."<sup>72</sup> Macmurray defined what he meant by "object" when speaking of an "object of contemplation" when he averred that: "I mean much what John Locke meant by an idea-whatsoever is before man's mind when he thinks. It must, of course, be something which can be exhibited or symbolised in sensual terms."<sup>73</sup> Again an indication of Macmurray's empirical roots.

The contemplative attitude is essential to all artistic activity. "The essential point, in which the contrast with the scientific attitude is very clear, is that the subject is individualised equally and reciprocally with the object."<sup>74</sup> The artist "sees the object in its individual uniqueness, and is himself individualised in the process".<sup>75</sup> The essential element in the contemplation is the individualisation both of the object and the artist.

There is a mature statement of the central issues of the artistic attitude in The Self as Agent, which evinces Macmurray's awareness of the pitfalls that exist about the concept of contemplation. "The hall-mark of the aesthetic standpoint is that it defines both the true and the good as that which satisfies the mind."<sup>76</sup> The proper definition of beauty is "a disinterested satisfaction",<sup>77</sup> which is a re-statement of the concept of emotional self-transcendence.

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72. RAS p.39

73. RAS pp.40-41

74. RAS p.41

75. RAS p.41

76. SA p.55

77. SA p.55



Macmurray elucidated this point further:

The ground of our judgement is a feeling of satisfaction which refers to the form of what is apprehended. But the pleasure we find in contemplating the beautiful is not the satisfaction of a particular need or interest of ours. It is a disinterested satisfaction. It appeals to us, not as particular individuals, but as cognitive beings. It satisfies the mind. 78

However, there is a warning that is given that applies to the concept of mental satisfaction. Since there is a tendency to universalise claims of validity, as opposed to being a matter of private taste, which explains the tendency to treat the immediate inner conviction of the beautiful as a guarantee of truth, there is the possibility of error. "The fatal error is the assumption that truth is what satisfies the mind."<sup>79</sup>

The idea of art as a rational field and a particular type of reason can be found throughout Macmurray's work. In one of his earliest works Interpreting the Universe he contended that: "Rationality is not a peculiar characteristic of the intellect."<sup>80</sup> Macmurray presented art as a rational attitude, as rational as science. <sup>art to be</sup> Macmurray not only considered art to be rational, but he also identified the constant aspect of artistic reason that is within art, and labelled this "emotional reason". "The field in which emotional reason expresses itself most directly is the field of art. The artist is directly concerned to express his emotional experience of the world."<sup>81</sup> The concept of emotional reason is intimately connected with religion as well as with artistic reflection. Macmurray asserted when speaking of both art and religion that: "They are the expression of reason working in the emotional life in search of reality."<sup>82</sup>

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78. SA p.59

79. SA p.59

80. IU p.131

81. RE p.30

82. RE p.54

But what is emotional reason and how does it appear in art? "The reason working in our emotional life forces us to take our feelings as an awareness of things outside us, as a consciousness of the meaning and value of things other than ourselves."<sup>83</sup> One becomes an artist based upon the emotional consciousness of the world. Art is a way of expressing emotional rationality. Macmurray's discussion of emotional reason within art is reminiscent of his concept of emotional self-transcendence which is one of the basic elements of contemplation. A rather Kantian observation about art as reason is that it is the expression of "our capacity as rational beings to apprehend the values of things in themselves; not their value to us but their own right as individuals in the world."<sup>84</sup> Art is the expression of our rational impulse to delight in the individual objects that surround us in the world.

Art, however, has its weaknesses and limitations. The rational and mature aim of a mature art would be to reach "nearer and nearer, through co-operative efforts of many individuals, to a real emotional knowledge of the significance of real things".<sup>85</sup> Art is still immature as is religion and makes the mistake of not realising its limitations.<sup>86</sup> There are two immature features within art. The first being its still unobtained goal and the second its inability to recognise the limits of its territory of reflection.

Both art and science are in Macmurray's view "objective" and "fragmentary". However, the fragmentary nature of art is deeper than

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83. RE p.54

84. RE p.60

85. RE p.66

86. RE p.237



that of science, since not only are there many separate disciplines, but each artist is separate from the other because of the difference in individual perception. The objectivity of art is valuational, whereas the objectivity of science is descriptive.<sup>87</sup> "Each artist is confined within the limits of his own acquaintance with the world, within his individual objectivity."<sup>88</sup> There is a wide gap between the differing products of art and science. Art produces knowledge which is the individual's grasp of reality, whereas science only gives information about the object. The contemplation of the individual object in its proper being is knowledge proper which is the province of art.

The function of science is the manipulation of the material world, so what is the function of art? Macmurray asseverated that "the function of art then is the education and refinement of sensibility. Sensibility is feeling determining an image...."<sup>89</sup> The central function of art is for Macmurray the refinement of sensibilities,<sup>90</sup> but there are also the functions of educating the emotions and the training of judgement. Art is concerned with "the exhibition of values, and, therefore, in relation to action, with the choice of ends".<sup>91</sup> There is another subsidiary function which is practical in nature, which is to "maintain and preserve against the ravages of time things which have for us an intrinsic value".<sup>92</sup>

"The artistic attitude is that of the looker-on, admiring and loving what it sees, but not participating in the life that it

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87. PR p.181

88. RE p.162

89. PR pp.183-184

90. RAS p.42

91. RAS p.42

92. RE p.32

contemplates, except in imagination, subjectively."<sup>93</sup> Science deals with the matter of fact, whereas art deals with the matter of intention. Art is concerned with the knowledge of values which will develop our capacity for discriminating intuitively between good and bad; on the other hand science is related to technical activity and knowledge of the matter of fact upon which a technology can be based.<sup>94</sup> The field of art is the things of intrinsic value<sup>95</sup> in the universe; the field of science is the things of utility value in the universe. Science and art represent the two opposing modes of reflection which can be termed the emotional and intellectual modes of reflection.

#### The Religious Mode of Apperception

Macmurray in his treatment of the three modes of reflection clearly delineated the position in which he placed religion, which is clearly illustrated in his introductory remark that: "I have therefore chosen for the form of lectures a consideration of these three modes of reflection. The treatment of art and science will be, of course, designed to throw light upon the character of religion."<sup>96</sup>

As has already been discussed, Macmurray argued that there are three modes of reflection, two of which have been discussed, i.e. the practical and aesthetic modes. These two attitudes are antithetical and since both attitudes are found in the same mind and one or the other attitude can be adapted by a single mind, "then there must be an attitude of mind which combines the two antithetical

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93. RE p.60

94. RAS p.45

95. Mooney op cit., p.66

96. RAS p.7

attitudes".<sup>97</sup> Without an attitude that combines both of these two antithetical modes the human mind might well be in continuous conflict with itself. Religion does seek to combine these two attitudes, an example of which is to be found in primitive rituals which combine the expression of beauty with the more practical objective of maintaining the tribe and securing its welfare. Macmurray asserted that: "We may, therefore, conclude not merely that there must be an attitude of mind which synthesizes the two opposites, but that the activities of religion are rooted in it, and are at least one of the forms of its expression."<sup>98</sup>

The religious attitude includes a method of valuation which is different from the intrinsic and extrinsic values of art and science.<sup>99</sup> The religious valuation is developed because of the problems one has in one's relations with other persons. The extrinsic valuation fails because it understands the other person only in terms of utility value, which means that all individuals would continually try to use other individuals for their own ends. The intrinsic attitude also fails to establish satisfactory relations between people, since the intrinsic valuation establishes only mutual admiration and the desire of one individual to keep another individual with him "for the emotional satisfaction of watching them with admiration".<sup>100</sup> What is needed in our relations with other persons is to recognise according to Macmurray that: "the essential reciprocity of the relationship, is an attitude

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97. SRE p.34

98. SRE p.35

99. Thomason W.P. "The Empirical Basis for Religion in John Macmurray's Philosophy" (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1972) p.180

100. SRE p.41

which somehow contains both of the other two attitudes while transcending them both."<sup>101</sup> One needs co-operation that is part of the intrinsic valuation as well as the recognition of another's worth. Therefore, if we are to enter into relations with one another, "it has to be in terms of an attitude to one another which is able to unite these two attitudes, and so to combine utility-value and intrinsic value. This attitude is the religious attitude, and it is best expressed in terms such as 'fellowship' or 'communion'. We have to enter into fellowship with one another and so to create community."<sup>102</sup> This clearly illustrates the essential role that the concept of community has in Macmurray's thinking.

Macmurray was careful to discuss the differences between religion and art or science, and furthermore he explicitly pointed out the differences, thereby hoping to stop any confusion of religion with either art or science. Macmurray asserted that: "the confusion with science comes from thinking of religion and of science as competing systems of belief about the world; and the confusion with art from reducing religion to a contemplation of the ideal".<sup>103</sup> On closer examination the field of religion is much wider than a combination of just the intellectual and emotional modes of reflection since it also has characteristics that go beyond the artistic and scientific attitude. "In the field of religion, each of us appears twice, both as the source of valuation and as the object of valuation."<sup>104</sup> This alludes

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101. SRE pp.41-42

102. SRE pp.42-43

103. RAS p.48

104. SRE p.37

to a union of immanence and transcendence which is an essential characteristic of human personality. The scientific and artistic modes treat things as objects whereas the reciprocal nature of human relations offers up the union of the transcendence of the object with the immanence of the object which is the person. Artistic and scientific reflection are solitary whereas religious reflection is reciprocal and mutual.<sup>105</sup>

The differences between science and religion are more easily delineated than the differences between art and religion. Macmurray discussed science in terms of its differences with religion, whereas art is seen as something that is closer to religion, and discussed on occasion with religion, although Macmurray clearly warned about dangers of confusing art and religion.

Macmurray maintained that: "The proper way of representing the relation between religion and science, then is to say that religion is the expression of an adequate apperception of our relation to the world, while science is the expression of a limited, partial, and therefore inadequate, apperception."<sup>106</sup> This is not a criticism of science, since the limitation of science is necessary, but it does deal with any representation of science and religion as alternative ways of apprehending the world. Macmurray is of the opinion that only the religious mode is comprehensive enough to adequately apprehend the world and express our relation with the world.

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105. Mooney op cit., p.73

106. PR p.218

Macmurray asserted that: "science and religion are extremes, and present essentially extreme contrasts."<sup>107</sup> There are four extreme contrasts that Macmurray underlined: Science like art, is fragmentary, while religion is one, like philosophy."<sup>108</sup> Art as well as science can succeed only through separation into many different fields of interest; which is essential for the existence of science in particular. Macmurray asserted that: "science can never be the knowledge of this or that scientist, while religion is always the religion of this or that man. It is always personal."<sup>109</sup> The idea of the personal as opposed to the impersonal is the main point of contrast between science and religion. The second contrast is that science is abstract and religion is concrete. Science must be abstract, it cannot look at an individual wholeness, and since concreteness is the "wholeness which constitutes the individuality of things",<sup>110</sup> the generalising nature of science makes it abstract. When one begins to analyse and classify one becomes committed to the dissolution of the wholeness of the individual, since analysis presupposes the breaking up of things into their constituents. The other factor of abstraction is generalisation which destroys individuality. "The moment you generalise you are committed to dealing with your subject matter in a special aspect, in terms of what individuals have in common, in contrast to the specific differences which mark their individuality, which make them themselves."<sup>111</sup> This

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107. RE p.185

108. RE p.185

109. RE pp.185-186

110. RE p.186

111. RE p.186



is not a condemnation of science since it is the business of science to analyse and classify things in general terms. "Any individual object or person or event is for science merely one of many -- an instance, an example, a particular fact illustrating a general rule, known or unknown."<sup>112</sup> Science is for Macmurray descriptive and not explanatory. "The scientific attitude faced with fact, always refers it to something else, some other fact."<sup>113</sup>

The third contrast between religion and science is that: "religion is concerned with value; science is not".<sup>114</sup> Science guards against any influence brought about by emotional nature. However, emotion is necessary in order to grasp reality. Interest is emotional and imposes values which concentrates upon and selects the object. In order to be completely general one would have to be completely disinterested. Macmurray asserted that: "Science in itself, is strictly valueless. That obviously does not mean that science has no value, but that its value is derived from outside itself."<sup>115</sup> Macmurray continued by adding somewhat confusingly that: "The value of science is a utility value, not intrinsic as that of religion. Science is in fact systematic information, nothing more; and information is for use."<sup>116</sup> The determination of the value of the information would necessarily be outside science and subject to human passions and desires, which is properly the province of emotional reflection.

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112. RE p.186

113. RE p.187

114. RE p.188

115. RE p.189

116. RE p.190

The fourth and final contrasting element between science and religion is the most extreme. Macmurray asserted that: "science is impersonal; religion is personal".<sup>117</sup> This lies at the heart of the matter, since the very essence of science is impersonal and the essence of religion is the personal. Science is concerned with gaining information while at the same time eliminating the personal factor from its activities and results. Science wishes to gain and hold information without personalising it. This is not possible since reality is in terms of information shared by persons and in fact science itself is an activity of persons. Macmurray concluded that: "science is an impersonal means to a personal end. Its impersonality is its limitations."<sup>118</sup> However, religion is unlimited since it is personal. "It (religion) is the whole unity of reality gathered into the life of a person and so gathering into its own unity all the subordinate aspects of himself."<sup>119</sup>

Macmurray included the field of science within the field of religion. He asserted that: "religion has become the personal whole of life within which science has its humble but essential place."<sup>120</sup> Science is a search for systematic information about the world for people to use, on the other hand, religion reaches towards the full reality of knowledge, i.e. to the knowledge of God; consequently gathering in the fragments of science and making that knowledge real because God is individual as well as whole and concrete.

Whereas science and religion are in extreme contrast in Macmurray's eyes, art and religion in his view are much closer: "Art

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117. RE p.190

118. RE p.192

119. RE p.192

120. RE p.192



and religion are ways of living the personal life--and I mean by that the life of rational consciousness, the real life of human beings."<sup>121</sup> Both of these attitudes have present within them the drive toward the natural impulse to fulfill our own being, to be rational creatures, to achieve personality. Both have within them the blind urge to reason. However, they are both separate aspects of "this search of rational personality".<sup>122</sup> They both try to express the life of reason within us and attempt to help man to live in the knowledge of the reality in which he exists. Another point of contact between religion and art is that both are in the same stage of development. Macmurray believed that: "in art and religion mankind is still in the stage of immaturity."<sup>123</sup> There has never been a true art or true religion yet established since there is no mature art or religion.

There are many points of contact between art and religion, however, Macmurray warned of the possibility of confusion that might occur. The confusion arises from Greek thought and in particular Plato's thought. The substitution of art for religion is seen in the spiritualisation of religion, which rests upon the false dualism of mind and body, which Macmurray wholeheartedly rejected: "The purely spiritual, unrelated to the material, and unrealised in the material, is purely imaginary."<sup>124</sup> Art creates in the field of imagination, while religion creates only in the field of reality. The belief that religion is grounded in mysticism is a form of contemplative reflection, and consequently in the aesthetic field. Macmurray warned that if we "consider religion to express an emotional attitude to the world we are confusing aesthetic with religious

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121. RE p. 193

122. RE p. 54

123. RE p. 56

124. RAS p. 44

apperception."<sup>125</sup> Although there are points of contact between art and religion they are two different attitudes. However, there is another factor. Both art and science are different from religion and yet at the same time, aspects of religion.

The concept that religion is the basic mode of reflection from which other modes spring is at the very heart of Macmurray's thinking. Religion is seen as basic to all reflection as well as the basis of all activity. Since all human activities take place within the context of the community of persons which is the province of religion, then "religious activity includes scientific activity and artistic activity".<sup>126</sup> Macmurray asserted that: "Science and art, therefore, live with religion and are derived from it by a concentration upon one or other of its components. This is only an analytic way of stating the fact that science and art are made possible by the existence of human communities."<sup>127</sup> The strength of religion is that even though there is a dissociation of the two components, i.e. the intellectual and emotional, there is an overall unity within religion. Religion is able to unify "intellectual and emotional activity and does not require to withdraw from practical life".<sup>128</sup> However, once these components join in religion they are no longer truly art or science.

These two aspects of religion are labelled as 'ritual' and 'doctrinal' by Macmurray. "The first is the aesthetic in form, the second scientific. Of the two aspects, the aesthetic is the positive and primary, since it is valuational, and refers to the intention of

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125. PR p.218

126. SRE p.86

127. SRE p.87

128. SRE p.87

action; the scientific is secondary and negative, since the means presuppose the end."<sup>129</sup> Neither of these two components are art or science since they are held together in religion and complement each other. They both look to the unity of action which constitutes reality; one looks to the aspect of fact the other to the aspect of value, or the one to absolute Truth and the other to absolute Goodness. These two aspects of religion are most noticeable when one becomes prominent. Religion may become aggressive by turning to the pragmatic aspect which seeks through the use of force to reach a perfect community, or by turning to the aesthetic aspect and becoming submissive and idealistic and constantly referring to a world beyond this world. However, when the ties are loosened within religion which unites the two aspects, they then "enter upon an independent life of their own and become autonomous as science and art respectively".<sup>130</sup>

The unification of the emotional and intellectual aspects of religion brings one closer to the primary or central expression of religion which is for Macmurray found in communal symbolic action. This makes religion something more than the unification of the aesthetic and intellectual modes of thought since the activity is not a mental activity either of emotion and/or thought. This symbolic action "is at once part of the common life of the group of persons and an expression or symbol of the common life as a whole. To put it otherwise, it has the form of ritual or ceremonial activity; and this activity is itself the primary religious reflection".<sup>131</sup>

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129. PR p.174

130. PR p.175

131. RAS p.55

Activity does involve thought and emotion, but it can unify unlike emotional or intellectual reflection. Religion must be expressed in action since if one leaves it merely as a matter of emotion or thought there is always the possibility of ambiguity. Art and science are solitary pursuits, whereas religious reflection means dealing with personal relations. Therefore, it takes at least two to settle any problem and this is solved by mutual agreement. The solving of the problem includes not only the emotional and intellectual side of reconciliation, but also includes a mutual symbolic act of reconciliation, e.g. such as shaking hands. "This is a ritual act, which symbolises the common intention to take up again the common activity which the estrangement had interrupted."<sup>132</sup>

Macmurray's concepts of religion and community are intimately connected and closely interwoven. The basic problem of community is to overcome fear and subordinate the negative to the positive in the motivation of persons in relation.<sup>133</sup> Since this is the basic problem of human beings, the primary form of reflection should be concerned with the problem of relations. Macmurray defined religion as "the reflective activity which expresses the consciousness of community; or more tersely, religion is the celebration of community".<sup>134</sup> Religion is the appropriate form of reflection for interpersonal relationships,<sup>135</sup> which for Macmurray includes the other two forms of reflection, since both are rooted in the personal which is the proper ground of religious reflection. Macmurray's understanding of community is pivotal to his understanding of religion as well as art and science.

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132. RAS p.56

133. PR p.160

134. PR p.160

135. Mooney op cit., p.71

Religion in Macmurray's opinion is a total and universal factor in human existence. Religious reflection for Macmurray is total, "involving every aspect of the person, intellectual, emotional and practical; unconscious as well as conscious".<sup>136</sup> Religious reflection universalises the central factors in human experience.<sup>137</sup> Religion is a part of all human society, and consequently this is a basic fact about society. Macmurray considered the first factor of importance about religion to be "the universality of religion in human society".<sup>138</sup>

In comparison with art and science Macmurray placed great emphasis upon religion as the most basic mode of reflection which is always present in human society. Religion as well as being the basic mode of reflection is defined as the symbol of community as well as the way one reflects about community. Religion is basic to human reflection as well as universal to all human community and all human relationship. Macmurray summarised his approach to religion and the function of religion as:

the representation of the community of agents, and of the ultimate conditions of action, both in respect of its means and its ends. Religion, we may say, is the knowledge of the Other as community, and is the full form of reflective rationality. It is the knowledge which must inform all action for the achievement of community, and therefore the ground of all really efficient and really satisfactory action whatever.<sup>139</sup>

Macmurray's concept of religion focuses upon his understanding of human community.

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136. RAS p.59

137. SRE p.54

138. PR p.156

139. PR p.185

## CHAPTER 4

Macmurray's View of Experience

Macmurray's conceptualisation of experience is pivotal as well as foundational to his thinking. A clear understanding of what Macmurray means by experience and the way he approached the ideas and problems related to the concept of experience is necessary in order to clearly understand Macmurray's basic assumption and his general philosophical stand.

The first concept of importance in Macmurray's understanding of experience is his use of the concept of immediate experience. The concept of immediate experience is rudimentary to Macmurray's perception of experience, since for him the primary purpose of philosophy is to reflect upon and express in words the unity of immediate experience.<sup>1</sup> Immediate experience is unexpressed experience as opposed to experience that has been reflected upon and expressed. Macmurray asserted that: "Immediate experience is by definition experience which has not been thought about. It is, therefore, a presupposition of our thinking, not something that can be an element of thought."<sup>2</sup> Macmurray came close to restating the dictum that anything that is reflected upon is first sensed. Macmurray anchored his epistemology in the immediate experience of living.<sup>3</sup> "The immediacy of experience consists simply in the fact that we are immersed in it, that we are living in it, and not setting ourselves against it, as something other than us which we can

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1. Bozzo, Edward George, "Toward a Renewed Fundamental Moral Theology: The Implication of the Thought of John Macmurray for Christian Ethics" (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: Catholic University of America, 1969) p.102
  2. IU p.13
  3. Macmanus, Ora Roland, "The Concept of the Personal in The Writings of John Macmurray" (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: Catholic University of America, 1967) p.25



contemplate and study."<sup>4</sup> Macmurray went to great pains to point out that immediate experience is not primitive experience or elementary experience. Immediate experience is not something that belongs to our childhood, nor is it "an unchangeable substratum which accompanies us and all men throughout life".<sup>5</sup> Immediate experience is the experience of living and acting and not the experience of reflecting upon or thinking about living.<sup>6</sup>

An important characteristic of immediate experience and one that held great significance for Macmurray is the unity and completeness of immediate experience. The unity of immediate experience is in complete contrast with the disjointed aspects of reflective experience. In immediate experience nothing is:

really separate from anything else. Its parts are not 'cut off with a hatchet'; they flow into one another and belong together. Its aspect as knowledge, for instance, is not a separable part of it. It is unified with and coextensive with feeling and action. It is our consciousness in living rather than our consciousness of living. In immediate experience we know anything by being interested in it, by desiring it, by loving or hating it, and above all, by doing things with it. The knowledge that we show in playing a game of tennis is part of the activity of playing it. It is not separable either from the playing or from the pleasure in playing which prevades it. These basic aspects of experience — cognition, conation and feeling — are fused into a single whole in the living experience.<sup>7</sup>

When speaking of Kant's belief in the unity of experience Macmurray observed that: "The unity of experience as a whole is not a unity of knowledge, but a unity of personal activities of which knowledge is only one."<sup>8</sup>

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4. IU p.21

5. IU p.19

6. Kirkpatrick, Frank Gloyd, "The Idea of God in the Thought of John Macmurray" (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: Brown University, 1970) p.79

7. IU p.22

8. SA p.66

Once one stands back and thinks about something, a division appears between what we are reflecting upon and ourselves. "The unity and wholeness of living experience is broken."<sup>9</sup> Reflective experience in contrast with immediate experience is abstract, incomplete and relative. It is abstract, since it is separated from the unity of immediate life and becomes a partial and one-sided expression, which concentrates its energy in one area, thereby making experience incomplete. For Macmurray, thought, i.e. reflective experience, is constantly trying to become a substitute for feeling and action.<sup>10</sup> The source of reflection is immediate experience, and at the centre of this is the idea that true immediate experience cannot be a matter for reflection by definition. This does not mean that one cannot understand the expression of an experience without having had the experience oneself, but means that someone must have had at sometime the immediate experience. There is a distinct difference for Macmurray between thinking about an experience and immediately having an experience. Once one reflects upon the immediate experience one has broken the unity of immediate experience.<sup>11</sup>

The completeness or wholeness of immediate experience is for Macmurray illustrated by the expression "the infinite". Macmurray concluded about the term "the infinite" that:

The term is, of course, a negative term, because it is the reflective expression of something which cannot be given in reflection. The thing itself is more positive than anything else we know. It is in a special sense 'the real'. It is simply that something which is one and the same in all immediate experience, which includes it all, in which all

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9. IU p.23

10. IU pp. 22-23

11. Kirkpatrick, op. cit., p.51

determination and difference appears and to which everything belongs. It is only through the inadequacy of reflection that the infinite seems to lie beyond everything that we can think or do, so that it seems to be the result of adding more and more until we are breathless with the effort. The infinite is the universe in immediate experience. It is given always and everywhere in the finite.<sup>12</sup>

The completeness of experience emphasises the inadequacy of reflection since the unity of experience cannot be reached in the reflective act because it contains much that is not a part of the reflective act. It is impossible to resolve the wholeness of the unity of experience by recourse to a portion of it, namely reflective experience.

Macmurray held that knowledge is only a part of the total unity of experience. However, knowledge does play a primary role in reflection, and is in fact for Macmurray the basis of all thought. "Knowledge, then, is first and foremost that immediate experience of things which is prior to all expression and understanding."<sup>13</sup> Knowledge for Macmurray is unlike Locke's definition of knowledge in that it is more than the perception of the agreement or disagreement between ideas.<sup>14</sup> Locke's approach may be termed a theoretical conception of knowledge, whereas Macmurray's approach to knowledge was much broader. Macmurray clearly distinguished between two basic types of knowledge from the very beginning. The primary form of knowledge is practical or immediate knowledge. "Upon this primary knowledge all reflection and all thought are based."<sup>15</sup> If the full experience of the self is immediate experience, in which is contained one's capacities, this means that

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12. IU p.33

13. IU p.17

14. Thomason, William Paul, "The Empirical Basis for Religion in John Macmurray's Philosophy" (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1972) p. 93

15. IU p.17

the capacity to know will be included in the experiencing. Immediate experience entails immediate knowledge. This knowledge is a practical knowledge of the world and is presupposed by thought and reflection.<sup>16</sup> Therefore Macmurray reasoned that:

all thought presupposes knowledge. It is not possible to think about something you do not already know. It may be true that some things that we know cannot be understood or even described. But it is certain that nothing that is unknown can be described or understood. This is a principle which is frequently overlooked in philosophical discussion. We construct theories of knowledge which imply that knowledge is the result of thinking, and that it is, therefore, essentially bound up with the processes of reflective activity. The simple observation that you must know something before you can think about it completely upsets the equilibrium of all such theories. It is because we know things and are interested in them that we think about them at all. And the reason why we think about them cannot be in order to know them but at the most in order to know them better.<sup>17</sup>

Macmurray advanced the epistemological principle that knowledge is primarily practical, immediate and unreflective, which is to say that it postulates reflection.<sup>18</sup> Macmurray averred that: "we must always presuppose and depend upon the immediate unreflective knowledge which is the foundation of everything else."<sup>19</sup> There is, however, a second type of knowledge which occurs as the result of reflection and not as a precursor to reflection, which is called theoretical knowledge. There is the knowledge of immediate experience, and the knowledge which comes from reflection. Macmurray asserted that: "personal knowledge is a distinct type of knowledge and also logically prior to impersonal knowledge..."<sup>20</sup> Impersonal knowledge being the knowledge gained from reflection, whereas personal knowledge is gained directly from

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16. Kirkpatrick, op. cit., p.52

17. IU pp.15-16

18. Kirkpatrick, op. cit., p.53

19. IU p.19

20. IU p.19

immediate experience without the interference of reflection.

Macmurray's understanding of knowledge is certainly broader than that of Locke, since for Macmurray the concept of knowledge includes a cognitive element of experience which is not to be found in Locke's work. This may be connected with Macmurray's assumption that man is a doer, i.e. man is primarily an agent and not a knower. Macmurray held that all knowledge came directly and/or ultimately from immediate experience. Therefore, all knowledge comes directly or indirectly from experience and is grounded in immediate experience.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, someone must have had at sometime personal knowledge of whatever is being reflected upon or discussed even though one does not necessarily possess the personal knowledge gained from immediate experience. Experience is the source of all knowledge which refutes the claim of the idealists that knowledge can come from judgement alone. "Lastly, I am asserting that it is right to hold against the Idealist logicians that knowledge cannot be constituted entirely by judgement, that there must be some kind of immediate experience, including an immediate apprehension of a cognitive character, to form the basis out of which judgement springs."<sup>22</sup> Experience is the foundation from which all reflection emerges, which causes one to place Macmurray in the empirical tradition.

Unlike the classical empiricists experience for Macmurray went beyond the senses, he had a broader view of experience, which is clearly illustrated by his distinction between reflective experience and

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21. Thomason, op. cit., pp.95-97

22. Macmurray, John, "The Principle of Personality in Experience"  
PAS (1928-29) XXIX, p.323, hereafter cited as PPE

immediate or unexpressed experience. While the concept of reflective experience is not difficult, the concept of immediate experience is problematic since to think about or to express experience is to destroy the immediacy of the experience. Immediate experience has a number of definitive characteristics, the first of which is its unexpressed or unreflected-upon state, i.e. immediate experience is lived through, but is not thought about, which presupposes our immersion in experience. The best example of this characteristic of immediate experience is the knowledge one has of another person, which is the reason that Macmurray sometimes referred to practical knowledge as personal knowledge as opposed to impersonal knowledge or theoretical knowledge. A second characteristic of immediate experience is its unity and completeness. To stop and think or reflect breaks the wholeness of the living experience. Immediate experience, therefore, has as one of its properties a unity which is broken by the abstraction of reflective experience. Reflection separates the unity of one's experience into many unconnected parts. Macmurray stressed, nevertheless, that immediate experience is not primitive experience, i.e. not something that one can grow out of or the elemental substratum that exists within all men since it is different for each man. Although one can blunt one's capacity for immediate experience by talking and reflecting upon it, normal reflection can enlarge one's own feeling. Consequently, immediate experience is not just raw experience which is totally unaffected by thinking. Immediate experience cannot be reduced or limited to just experiences, since sense experience is only an element of immediate experience. Sense experience seems to presuppose a certain amount of passivity on the part of the agent, whereas for Macmurray the activity of the agent is the source of experience. This underlines the difference between Macmurray's view



and that of the classical empiricists in that Macmurray's outlook was essentially based upon action, whereas the view of the classical empiricists were essentially one of passivity.<sup>23</sup>

The epistemological principles, that have been so far discussed, point to a general connection between experience, knowledge and reflection. Reflection is only possible upon what has been or is capable of being experienced by the self.<sup>24</sup> All theoretical conclusions or hypotheses about what is possible for activity in the world must be verified by being part of the self's immediate experience. These are the general principles that apply to all experience as well as to all reflection. As has already been noted there are different modes of reflection. The purpose of each of these modes of reflection is to improve theoretical or impersonal knowledge and thus ultimately the action of the self with respect to a more or less clearly defined area of experience. The action of the self to a certain extent depends for its successful functioning upon whether or not the theoretical knowledge improves. The intention behind a particular mode of reflection is to reflect upon a given area and to provide the self with reliable theoretical knowledge about a particular area, which is divided by Macmurray into three now familiar fields of art, science and religion.<sup>25</sup>

All of these three modes are grounded in the total field of human experience, therefore, each is related to the other. However,

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23. Thomason, op. cit., pp.123-127

24. Discussed in Chapter 5

25. Kirkpatrick, op. cit., pp.72-73



the different attitudes tend to emphasise different aspects of the field of experience, since certain experiences lend themselves more easily to one mode of reflection as opposed to another.

Although experience is a unity, and all the reflective activities of man refer to the whole of experience, there is in actuality a different centre or locus for each of the three attitudes, i.e. a different field of interest.<sup>26</sup>

Since the central mode of apperception is religion then the central problem is what can be considered the field of religious experience? "What are the normal and universal facts of human experience out of which religion, as a special kind of human behaviour arises?"<sup>27</sup> Macmurray's assumption was that someone talks about religion and therefore "there is a field of real, direct experience out of which religious phenomena emerge, and the way he interprets religion will reveal the kind of facts which he had in mind".<sup>28</sup> The problem seems to come from the fact "that it seems impossible to distinguish any special set of facts which form the field of religion. All the facts of experience seem to be data for the religious consciousness".<sup>29</sup> Which is a general statement of the problem of religious experience.

The field of religious experience is more than the whole field of human experience of the world around us, since it also includes ourselves. Macmurray understood the scientific attitude and the artistic attitude in terms of setting the world of experience against ourselves, which makes the total of experience an incomplete one for the artistic and scientific attitudes. Within religion there is not

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26. Thomason, op. cit., pp.161-162

27. SRE p.19

28. SRE p.19

29. SRE p.21

only the synthesis of the practical and contemplative, but also the broadening of the field by the inclusion of ourselves in the total equation of human experience. Macmurray observed that human beings are both "transcendent in experience and immanent in it".<sup>30</sup> The characteristic of the combination of immanence and transcendence is a fact of human personality which is an empirical and natural fact.<sup>31</sup> "The union of immanence and transcendence is a peculiar and defining characteristic of all personality, human or divine; but it is primarily a natural, empirical fact of common human experience."<sup>32</sup>

Another problem of the field of religion is the search for a distinct form of valuation that belongs to the field of religion. The scientific field has the extrinsic, practical or utility form of valuation, whereas the artistic has the intrinsic form of valuation. There seems to be no further room for another type of valuation since the above two forms are not only antithetical, but seemingly leave no scope for expansion.<sup>33</sup> This does not take into account that there is a primitive and essential character in human experience that has been overlooked. Macmurray asserted that: "The primary fact is that part of the world of common experience for each of us is the rest of us."<sup>34</sup> We are consequently forced to evaluate one another, and this evaluation is reciprocal. The reciprocity of the valuation adds a new dimension. The valuation of one person by another person is different from both the intrinsic and extrinsic forms of valuation that are found in science and art. The object of valuation in being another person brings in

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30. SRE p.38

31. SRE p.38

32. SRE p.38

33. SRE p.32

34. SRE p.39

the factor of reciprocity. This sets the central problem of human life, and sets the stage for the central problem of religion. "It is this central fact to which Jesus drew attention when he said: 'judge not, that ye be not judged; for with what judgement ye judge, ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again'. It is the fact that all personal relationships are mutual and reciprocal in their very nature."<sup>35</sup>

The full significance of reciprocity can be grasped by seeing it in terms of activity, i.e. experience. In the experience of living the forces of necessity impose valuation on things and this reaction brings about the relation between ourselves and the things of the world. "Religion, the religious attitude, and the religious valuation, with the conception of the world which it organises, are forced upon us by the necessity of entering into relation with other people if we are to live at all."<sup>36</sup>

Macmurray defined the field of religious experience as "the whole field of common experience organised in relation to the central fact of personal relationship".<sup>37</sup> A simpler view is that: "the field of religion is the field of personal relations, and the datum from which religious reflection starts is the reciprocity or mutuality of these".<sup>38</sup> Therefore, the problems of religion are those of communion and community. "Religion is about fellowship and community, which are facts of direct, universal human experience."<sup>39</sup> Consequently, the religious mode of apperception focuses upon the field of communal experience. The mutual

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35. SRE p.40

36. SRE p.40

37. SRE p.43

38. SRE p.43

39. SRE p.43

valuation unites the two attitudes of utility and intrinsic valuation. The problem of valuation raised by religion because of the antithetical nature of intrinsic and extrinsic valuation is solved since a third point of valuation is made possible not only by the combination of the two antithetical methods of valuation, but also by the additional factor of mutuality, i.e. the mutual or reciprocal nature of valuation, which is found in the third form of valuation, i.e. the religious.

If an artist is lost in contemplation of an object and comes to discover that the object is contemplating him then there is a new awareness which causes a deeper and fuller experience, as well as a different type of experience. The emotional awareness is mutual and reason must express this mutual self-revelation of the two persons which is defined as communion.<sup>40</sup> Thus contemplation is a solitary occupation, whereas communion is mutual personal involvement and is a part of the religious mode of apperception.<sup>41</sup>

In Religion, Art and Science there is a summation of Macmurray's reasoning which shows the connection between the sharing of experience between people and religion. "We start from the empirical fact that we are human beings through communication, through the sharing of experience."<sup>42</sup> This points to the central fact that human beings are essentially social, not in the sense of just living in groups, although this is a fact, but by the fact that our thoughts are shared which comes from the environment in which we live. "It is that core of human existence in which we are in direct contact with one another, and into which we enter with the whole of ourselves, and not in virtue

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40. Macmanus, op. cit., pp.113-114

41. RAS p.43

42. RAS p.53

of this or that particular interest or duty."<sup>43</sup> This is what Macmurray termed the personal life as opposed to the functional or public life, which cannot be disentangled in reality from one another, since the functional or public life is part of the personal life. There is a problematic element of the deepest and most basic character in the personal life that compels us to stop and reflect upon it. "It is the problem of personal relationships; the problem of conflict, and enmity, of estrangement and reconciliation."<sup>44</sup> The problems of personal unity point to religion. The function of religion is to "maintain and extend, to deepen and develop human community".<sup>45</sup> Religion arises from and refers to the field of human relations, which is characterised by and evinced in the particular language that religion employs. "Terms like communion and fellowship; disobedience and forgiveness; love, enmity, estrangement and reconciliation are drawn directly from our experience of personal relationship and have meaning for us only because of this."<sup>46</sup> The foundation of religion is firmly planted in the experience of human relations and the communication and contact with other human beings and the problems that result from this contact.

Macmurray grounded his empirical view of religion in the concept of personal relations. The concept of communion and community and their concomitant components are all part of the religious experience both in terms of activity and reflection, which gives a broad field of interest to religious experience. Religion not only is grounded

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43. RAS p.54

44. RAS p.54

45. RAS p.54

46. RAS p.55

in human experience, but synthesises the antithetical elements that are present when one reflects on human experience. The principle underlying the idea of religion is reciprocal contemplation which is termed communion by Macmurray. However, the field of religious experience is not limited to mutuality, but includes the total field of human experience which includes both immediate and reflective experience.

Macmurray dwells upon the objective aspects of religious experience, but he did recognise that there are subjective elements in religious experience. Macmurray observed that: "The religious man comes to worship, the artist to admire, the scientist to observe."<sup>47</sup> He did contend that there is a subjective ground of conviction, as well as an objective one, but he was very wary of the subjectivist's claims. The subjective aspect is the recognition of the fact that there is something in the human make up that sparks religious feelings and ideas. Macmurray contended that: "Almost without exception, human beings experience the sentiments of awe and reverence, with their curious interminglings of love and fear; and these feelings tend to find expression in an attitude of worship and adoration."<sup>48</sup> The subjective experience has also been called the mystical experience. The careful study of the psychology of religion which is referred to by Macmurray, and which typifies this approach is Rudolph Otto's study The Idea of The Holy.

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47. SRE p.21

48. Macmurray, John, "Religion in Transformation" This Changing World ed. J.R.M. Brumwell (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1945) p.250, hereafter cited as RIT



However, the subjective approach has definite dangers of which Macmurray was well aware. The work of Freud was of interest to Macmurray in reference to the subjective aspect of religion, since Freud saw religion as a "projection of the child's experience of family life ..."<sup>49</sup> Hence "man invents religion as a fulfillment of a secret and unconscious wish for the security and happiness of his days of childhood".<sup>50</sup> This is not unconnected with Marx's criticism that religion takes men's minds off the present reality and turns it towards future rewards. Marx consequently concluded that religion is a primitive device that is no longer needed.<sup>51</sup> Macmurray admitted that: "These theories of religion have a measure of truth in them, though the evidence on which they are based is very inadequate. They are plausible so long as we think only of the subjective aspect of religious experience, and imagine that religion is wholly produced by psychological forces."<sup>52</sup> Macmurray set out to discover what object excites this sense of awe.

Macmurray believed that this object of awe would have two characteristics. "It must be above us; beyond our control and our full comprehension; and also it must be congruous with us, of our own nature, and so personal."<sup>53</sup> Macmurray contended that: "the true object of a man's religion is that which he values absolutely, and what it is can only be shown by discovering what it is to which he is prepared, in the last resort, to sacrifice everything else."<sup>54</sup> This

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49. PR p.154

50. RIT p.252

51. RIT p.253

52. RIT p.255

53. RIT p.255

54. RIT p.256



definition or use of the term religion implies that every man is a religious man; it is the thing or the things to which he gives a supreme value, and if it is not of supreme value then he is practising a false religion. "Its falseness is a practical falseness. It cannot do what he expects from it. It cannot, in the nature of things, give wholeness and satisfaction to his personal life."<sup>55</sup> One must value what is inherently most valuable otherwise one's efforts will be senseless and futile since we are bound to the reality of the world outside of ourselves. Macmurray considered the highest thing of value to be personal; "it follows that to order our lives properly and satisfactorily we must value persons above all else and sacrifice or subordinate everything else to them".<sup>56</sup> Persons are a proper object of reference and the problem of relations to one another is the primary problem of practical life and is the key to all the other problems. Religion arises from the universal practical problems of human relationships and the function of religion is "to discover, create and sustain the conditions of satisfactory human relationship".<sup>57</sup> Macmurray concluded that this:

is why religion always talks in personal terms about personal relations; about man's relation to God -- that is to say, about the relation of finite persons to infinite and eternal personality -- about enmity and reconciliation, about love and brotherhood. That is why its organisation are 'communions' and its rituals are rituals of communion. Religion, in other words, is about community; ....<sup>58</sup>

The field of religious experience is the field of the personal which manifests itself in friendship, fellowship and communion. It is a

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55. RIT p.256

56. RIT p.257

57. RIT p.258

58. RIT p.258

universal human experience. The religious experience is open to all; it is not dependent upon any form of mystical experience or feeling of awe, although this is one of the manifestations of the religious experience. Religious experience is a fundamental and primary experience. Macmurray's thesis is that the centre of the field of religion is that of the experience of personality.<sup>59</sup> Macmurray defined religion in terms of the full emotional and intellectual reality of mutual relationships with one another and also in terms of the Other; he is aware that this refers to the so-called 'perfect' religious experience.<sup>60</sup> Macmurray was fully aware of the fact that relationships tend to be broken and insecure, and that one must strive to maintain and increase the fellowship and trust that is part of the relationship. Macmurray underlined that this is the main issue for religious reflection. The religious problematic, which is Macmurray's term, encompasses the insecure and broken nature of human relationships.<sup>61</sup>

There is a direct connection between personality, religious experience and Macmurray's understanding of the Other, i.e. God. Macmurray summed up this connection as follows:

If personality is the bearer of value, and value includes meaning; if mind is an aspect of personality and the personal includes the impersonal, it follows that Absolute Reality is personal, the idea of God is, of course, the idea of a personal Absolute. We have, therefore, a right to speak of the completest experience of Reality as a communion with God.<sup>62</sup>

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59. Macmanus, op. cit., pp.117-118

60. PR p.151

61. Hoffman, J.C., "Religion and Religious Experience in the Thought of John Macmurray", Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses, p.1

62. PPE p.329

The most complete form of experience is the religious experience and this form of religious experience is communion with the Other, i.e. God. Religious experience when defined as personal relationship does not differ markedly from the more common understanding of religious experience as communion with God. Macmurray places God at the apex of all relationships. The awe of religion is not only subjective, but is also grounded in the matter of fact of mutual personal relations.

The focus of the field of experience from which religion arises is the mutuality of personal relationships.<sup>63</sup> The mutuality of relationships between persons contains within it the full significance of life. Macmanus opined about Macmurray that: "The mutuality of interpersonal relations became for him the touchstone of what was truly real."<sup>64</sup> The empirical base on which Macmurray supports religion is grounded upon the mutuality of personal relationships.<sup>65</sup>

Macmurray, as has been noted, isolated the experience of knowing before reflection, i.e. immediate experience. This approach to experience has a natural affinity with the 'I-Thou' model of relationships. Macmurray placed emphasis upon interpersonal relations and sought to understand and gain access to man's nature through mutuality, i.e. 'the between',<sup>66</sup> as had Martin Buber.

The importance of the idea of interpersonal relationships is clearly in evidence when Macmurray asserted that:

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63. Thomason, op. cit., p.189

64. Macmanus, op. cit., p.200

65. Thomason, op. cit., p.189

66. Macmanus, op. cit., pp.200-201

For I am not alone in the world; there are other agents, and if they will not allow me to do what I desire to do I cannot do it. Moreover, there are few things which I can desire to do, and none that are of personal significance, which do not depend upon the active co-operation of others. We need one another to be ourselves. This complete and unlimited dependence of each of us upon the others is the central and crucial fact of personal existence. ... We live and move and have our being not in ourselves, but in one another; and what rights or powers or freedom we possess are ours by the grace and favour of our fellows. Here is the basic fact of our human condition; which all of us can know if we stop pretending, and do know in moments when the veil of self-deception is stripped from us and we are forced to look upon our own nakedness.<sup>67</sup>

Personal relationships are not only extremely important not to say pivotal, but they are exceptional in terms of other experiences, because of the added dimension of reciprocity or mutuality. Macmurray emphasised the importance of mutuality as well as the view that it was exceptional in his earliest work Interpreting the Universe.

The experience of other persons has an essential quality which makes it different from any other kind of experience. It is the consciousness of mutual relationship of the meeting of like with like, for in it we find a response from the object at our own level. It is this essential mutuality which forms the essence of our experience of persons.<sup>68</sup>

The characteristic that distinguishes all human actions for Macmurray is the constant reference of a person to the personal Other. Communication between persons is the behaviour that makes up what Macmurray calls personal motive. Behaviour is incomplete without a response from the Other. "This primary and distinctive character of personal behaviour we shall refer to hereafter as the mutuality of the personal. It is what we mean when we say that the personal is constituted by the relation of persons. The reference to the personal Other is constitutive of all personal existence."<sup>69</sup>

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67. PR p.211

68. IU p.126

69. PR p.69

The primary importance of the concept of mutuality for Macmurray can be fully appreciated when one realises that he utilised the concept in his definition of self-realisation. The process of self-identity could not and would not go forward in Macmurray's opinion if the fact of mutuality were not present. It is only through the interchange between persons that one finds one's own identity and personhood.<sup>70</sup>

Macmurray in his discussion of what he calls the rhythm of withdrawal and return, which is his phrase for describing the dynamic interaction of persons, makes it clear that an appreciation of one's individuality arises from a progressive differentiation of the original unity of the 'you' and 'I' in a common life and that this common life remains as the substratum that is the precursor of individuality.<sup>71</sup>

Macmurray declared that:

The 'You' and 'I' relation, we must recall, constitutes the personal, and both the 'you' and the 'I' are constituted, as individual persons, by the mutuality of their relation. Consequently, the development of the individual person is the development of his relation to the Other. Personal individuality is not an original given fact. It is achieved through the progressive differentiation of the original unity of the 'You' and 'I'.<sup>72</sup>

Besides the heterocentric character that is found as a part of mutuality there is also contained within mutuality the seeds of self-realisation.

"One can only really know one's friends, and oneself through one's friends, in a mutuality of self-revelation."<sup>73</sup> One can only fully participate in self-revelation within the framework of mutuality. This is a direct consequence of the heterocentric character of mutuality.

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70. PR p.211

71. Bozzo, op. cit., pp.239-240

72. PR p.91

73. PR p.170

Heterocentric valuation is the cornerstone of any form of mutual valuation. In the personal mode of valuation the centre of the valuation is outside of oneself. The other is important, not the self. "The other is the centre of value. For himself he has no value in himself, but only for the other; consequently he cares for himself only for the sake of the other. But this is mutual; the other cares for him disinterestedly in return."<sup>74</sup>

The heterocentric character of mutual valuation has two essential elements that are posited by its existence. The first of these necessary elements is the equality of the relationship.<sup>75</sup> Equality is necessary for mutuality to exist. "For, without equality, there can be no mutuality."<sup>76</sup> This does not mean that the persons who are within the relation are completely equal, i.e. they do not have as a matter of fact equal abilities, equal rights, or equal functions. "The equality is intention; it is an aspect of the mutuality of the relation. If it were not an equal relation, the motivation would be negative; a relation in which one was using the other as a means to his own ends."<sup>77</sup> Macmurray also simply stated that: "the other is my equal, my fellow. If I meet him, he meets me in the same sense. We meet as man to man."<sup>78</sup> Without the presupposition of equality, mutuality would itself never grow; or it may even die with the resumption of inequality.

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74. PR p.158

75. Thomason, op. cit., p.187

76. RE p.227

77. PR p.158

78. RE p.205



The second postulate that is contained within the concept of heterocentricity is that the relationship is carried out freely. There is no restraint on either person. Macmurray asseverated that: "they both realise their freedom as agents, since in the absence of the fear for the self there is no constraint on either, and each can be himself fully; neither is under obligation to act a part".<sup>79</sup> Without the presupposition of freedom in the relationship as well as equality, the mutuality that is so necessary for self-realisation as well as the underpinning for community is not present.

The interdependent and close connection between religion and mutuality is essential to Macmurray's understanding of people as well as religion. "The relationship between persons constitutes their individual personality, and this mutuality of the personal is the basic fact of religion."<sup>80</sup> Not only is mutuality basic to religion, but the requirements that Macmurray sets down for the existence of self-identity or personality are similar to the requirements for religion. Macmurray discussed religion in terms of the community of persons and commented that friendship is "the fundamental fact of human life".<sup>81</sup> He went on to say that the "capacity for communion, that capacity for entering into free and equal personal relations is the thing that makes us human, it is the rock on which personality is built".<sup>82</sup> The heterocentric presupposition of equality and freedom underlie personality, community and religion.

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79. PR p.158

80. RE p.223

81. RE pp.62-63

82. Ibid.



The final question that must be asked has to do with the possibility of mutuality breaking down and the subsequent actions that would stem from this deterioration. When one denies one's intrinsic relation with others, one is bound to feel frustration. To deny relationships with others brings about the accompanying feeling of self-annihilation. Frustration comes about since mutuality is denied only in its intentional form and it still remains as a matter of fact. Any attempt to negate mutuality in action is counter to the fact that mutuality is constitutive of my personality.<sup>83</sup> Mutuality as matter of intention, i.e. choice, may come into conflict with mutuality as a matter of fact, which brings about frustration. Macmurray realised that: "Now, in general, the personal relation is unavoidable, since the personal is constituted by the personal relation; and the refusal of mutuality is the frustration of personal existence absolutely."<sup>84</sup> On the practical level not only does the refusal of mutuality bring about the inability to understand others, it also brings to a half self-realisation.

The concept of mutuality is a central one for Macmurray in that it not only serves as the basis of human relations, but also as the basis of human personality and religion. The concept, however, is not simply a term that can be reduced to one's relationships with another. The concept of mutuality has many mitigating and complicating factors. For example there are two conceptions of mutuality, i.e. the mutuality of intention and mutuality of fact, which includes the substratum of personality. The experience of mutuality is a special form of experience, since the object is conscious of being observed

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83. Bozzo, op. cit., pp.224-225

84. PR p.73

as well as observing the subject. This quality makes mutuality foundational and the primary ground of experience, i.e. human personality which is also the focus of the religious mode of apperception.

Macmurray's assumptions about and analysis of religious experience differed in some ways with more commonly held assumptions about religious experience. Macmurray seemed to be at odds with the idea that religious experience as such exists as something distinctive and rare; he conversely seemed to posit that religious experience is not only something common, but essential to human life.

H.D. Lewis in Our Experience of God remarked that:

If a religious experience makes possible, as may well happen, insights very markedly different from those we normally enjoy or brings with it powers which neither the agent himself nor others commonly exercise, then it will distinguish itself more sharply from other experiences and be more easily delimited. But in no case, except perhaps preternatural experiences, will there be an obvious discontinuity, but rather a merging into appropriate sequels and the general change in the tenor of living.<sup>85</sup>

Not all agree with Lewis' assumption that religious experience is something slightly apart from everyday experience. C.H. Whiteley in response to Lewis' assumption stated that:

If we are to put religious experience into a special category, as we might put aesthetic or erotic experiences, and inquire into their properties, we assume that, as experiences, they have a special character or combination of characteristics which groups them together and marks them off from secular experience; 'the experiences which are properly religious' says Professor Lewis, 'are distinctive and specific'. Now it seems to me that the great majority of religious experiences, in this wide sense of the expression, have no such character.<sup>86</sup>

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84. PR p.73

85. Lewis, Heywell D., Our Experience of God (London: Collins, 1974) p.145

86. Santoni, Ronald E., (ed.) Religious Language and the Problem of Religious Knowledge. H.D. Lewis and C.H. Whiteley "The Cognitive Factor in Religious Experience" (London: Indiana University Press, 1968) p.258

Although Whiteley took a more moderate view of religious experience than did Professor Lewis, he still considered religious experience to be exceptional for a different reason.<sup>87</sup> Whiteley wrote that: "Religious experiences are rare, and therefore unfamiliar; we do not know our way about them as we do about the everyday world, and we do not have the same amount of guidance from other people."<sup>88</sup> Both of these positions, i.e. Professor Lewis' and Mr Whiteley's, seem to assume that religious experience is something that is beyond or above the world of everyday living. Macmurray went to great pains to divorce himself entirely from the concept of a special or distinctive character as a part of the 'religious experience'. Macmurray did not in fact set aside a certain group of experiences as those which are religious only. Macmurray assumed that there is a locus or centre of interest around which each particular attitude or mode of reflection centres its investigation. However, Macmurray's understanding of immediate experience and the central experience of mutuality makes it impossible to break experience into categories, since such an attempt at categorisation by definition disrupts and destroys the wholeness and unity of immediate experience, or put the religious experience in a special category. One may only differentiate between the different modes of reflection, i.e. different ways of viewing experience.

Macmurray acknowledged the existence of the subjective experience as being of interest, but not as the centre of the religious experience. There have been several theologians in the history of the study of

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87. Ibid p.258

88. Ibid p.259

religious experience that have considered the subjective experience to be the key to religious experience. For example, there was Fredierich Schleiemacher's concept of the "feeling of dependence" which underlay his understanding of the experience that points to God.<sup>89</sup> Macmurray himself mentioned Rudolph Otto as an example of a well known theologian that made use of the concept of subjective experience to define religious experience. Otto claimed that the feeling of awe or reverence which he labelled the 'numinous' is at the core of religion.<sup>90</sup> Otto maintained that the sense of the numinous lay at the root of religion and he distinguished this state of mind from any other state of mind. Otto referred to the combination of 'awe' and 'good' as 'holy'.<sup>91</sup>

Macmurray did not believe that psychological forces were at the centre of religious experience.<sup>92</sup> Macmurray posited that man's feelings are not developed in a vacuum but are affected by the forces that surround him. They are developed in relation to the actual world in which one lives. Gilbert Ryle has pointed out that when one talks of 'experiences' one tends to treat mental events as being part of the same general type as physical events, consequently making what he terms a general category mistake.<sup>93</sup> Ryle's analysis of mental events as opposed to physical events illustrates one of the weaknesses of the subjective approach to religious experience. Another criticism of the

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89. Schleiermacher, Friedrich, The Christian Faith, (Edinburgh: T.T. Clark, 1928) p.17

90. Otto, Rudolph, The Idea of the Holy, (London: Oxford University Press, 1923) p.6

91. Ibid pp.6-7

92. RIT p.253

93. Ward, Keith, The Concept of God, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974) pp.19-20

subjective approach comes from the realisation that the experiences of a person are shaped by his beliefs, consequently the feeling of awe may be only part of one's desire for belief in God.<sup>94</sup> One should not, therefore, deal only with an inner mental state, but also with the object or the physical event. Macmurray tried to find the physical events that were connected to the religious state of mind. He concluded that these physical experiences or events were centred around the experience of mutuality; this 'in between' in human relationships is a physical experience that is connected to the inner mental state. Not only does this mental state have an empirical basis which is mutuality, it is also the basis of one's communion with God. One is then talking about an actual occurrence that is directly connected to an inner mental state of mind. Macmurray thereby hoped to avoid confusing the events of the mind with external events since the external event leads to the mental event.

However, there are dangers in the stand that Macmurray chose to adopt. Macmurray's field of experience is so broad that his definition comes dangerously close to being without limits. One might say that Macmurray has broadened the field of religion to such an extent that one can no longer point to anything whatsoever and call it religion. In doing so the impact of religious experience is no longer present, i.e. the feeling of being gripped by some experience that is beyond the self and not part of the self. Macmurray has placed his emphasis upon the religious attitude, thereby removing hopefully some of the problems that arise from looking for specific religious experiences, but has he left room for the revelatory experience? Is there in fact

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94. Penelhum, Terence, Religion and Rationality, (London: Macmillan, 1971) p.176

in Macmurray's scheme a method by which one can receive and understand revelation? Revelation for Macmurray seems to be the ever present personal experience enlightened by a particular attitude.

In the investigation of experience in particular religious experience, the experience of mutuality is of great importance. Mutuality is 'the between' in the relationship, which makes up the central content of not only the religious experience, but human life, in that it is the central experience in human relationships which is the foundation of each individual's self-realisation. Religious experience is bound up with a clear understanding of mutuality and the concept of personal relationships, which are part of the concept of community.

The next step in the chain after immediate experience according to Macmurray, is the reflective experience. To understand more fully what Macmurray means by religion one needs to look at the reflective experience or activity.

CHAPTER 5

Macmurray's View of Reflection



The concept of immediate experience is closely linked, one might even say intertwined with the concept of reflection. Macmanus points out that Macmurray's primary aim in his analysis is not the understanding of immediate experience itself, but the analysis of the nature of reason.<sup>1</sup> This naturally leads us to Macmurray's approach to, and understanding of reflection.

When undertaking an investigation of Macmurray's approach to reflection one is confronted with several avenues that lead to Macmurray's theory of reflection. The main sphere of concern centres around the concept of reflective activity, but there are three areas that are of special interest. The first area of particular interest has to do with reason as the capacity for objectivity with the accompanying issue of the interdependence of reason and emotion within reflection. The second region of interest in Macmurray's analysis of reflection concerns the characteristics of thinking, which includes Macmurray's concepts of verification, unity-pattern and symbolism. The third area and one of special interest, has to do with the correlation between religion and reason.

The analysis of immediate experience by Macmurray is aimed at understanding the nature of reason,<sup>2</sup> and this is emphasised by the interdependence of reflection and immediate experience. The quality of the immediate experience not only depends upon the actual experience, but also upon the reflective experience of the person, which underlines the connection between reflection and immediate experience. The activities of reflection are motivated by the fact, that our memories of action,

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1. Macmanus, Ora Roland, "The Concept of the Personal in the Writings of John Macmurray" (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: The Catholic University of America, 1967) p.204
  2. Bozzo, Edward George, "Towards a Renewed Fundamental Moral Theology: The Implications of the Thought of John Macmurray for Christian Ethics" (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: The Catholic University of America, 1969) p.252

i.e. the immediate experience and its mental component practical knowledge, are incomplete and fragmentary. Macmurray maintained that: "The rational activities of reflection are efforts to extend, and in extending to correct where necessary the fragmentary content of immediate memory."<sup>3</sup> As has already been noted earlier, the reflective experience, unlike immediate experience which is unified, is fragmentary in nature. The reflective experience introduces a division between the thinker and the object.<sup>4</sup> However, reflection is a necessary element, since one confronts failures in concrete activity for which immediate experience provides no means of overcoming. One of Macmurray's pivotal assertions is that: "Thought begins in doubt".<sup>5</sup> Macmurray considered action to be primary and thought to be secondary, and consequently normal thinking is only an interruption of the process of living and its justification "can only lie in its capacity to remove the cause of the interruption, so that the completeness of spontaneous life may be restored".<sup>6</sup>

For Macmurray thinking is an activity which brings about no change in the world. Thinking is an action that is not an action.<sup>7</sup> "The activities of reflection, since they are not action, but "doings" of the Subject, make no difference to the Object. They merely determine for the Subject in idea what is already determinate in fact."<sup>8</sup>

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3. SA p.171

4. Macmanus, op. cit., p.23

5. IU pp.36-37

6. IU pp.38.-39

7. Kirkpatrick, Frank Gloyd, "The Idea of God in the Thought of John Macmurray" (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: Brown University, 1970) p.57

8. SA p.171

Macmurray pointed out that at the root of the distinction between real or concrete activity and reflective activity lies the distinction between images and things. However, the distinction is not that simple or clear cut, since the image of an object is a guiding factor in our perception of that object. Macmurray pointed out that: "The image of anything guides perception in the search for the thing."<sup>9</sup> Consequently, thought is an activity since it is a part of experience and all experience is active, but it is not a 'true' activity since it changes nothing in the world. Thought manipulates images as action manipulates things.<sup>10</sup> Thought and action are interdependent, but in Macmurray's opinion thought is secondary to action. There are some problems connected with this assumption since action cannot determine itself and needs some factor to determine which series of actions to undertake; this factor is reason. So can one say that thought is secondary to action?<sup>11</sup> One needs to point out that even though action is determined in fact; it is determined by intention, and this determination is within the province of reason. The interdependence of thought and action in Macmurray's thinking makes the subordination of one factor to another somewhat tenuous.

What is Macmurray's conception of reflection, i.e. what is his definition of reason? Macmurray believed that reason when considered only within the sphere of cognition is the capacity for apprehending or discovering truth. He asserted that: "Reason in the field of cognition, is our capacity for knowledge, and shows itself in the distinc-

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9. IU p.42

10. Thomason, W.P., "The Empirical Basis for Religion in John Macmurray's Philosophy" (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1972) p.140

11. This problem is more thoroughly covered in Harris, E., "Thought and Action" Review of Metaphysics (1959), Volume 12 pp.449-461

tion between truth and error."<sup>12</sup> However, Macmurray assumed that reason is primarily practical, and did not consider reason to be bound up with those activities which are only concerned with the requirements of knowledge. Macmurray expressed the wish to "cut reason loose from its limitation to the field of cognitional activity, and take it as the characteristic of personal activity in general."<sup>13</sup> Macmurray wanted to remove reason from the confines of pure thought and to broaden the definition of it. Macmurray considered reason to be the "capacity for objectivity, and to say that it is the possession of this capacity which distinguishes the persons from whatever is sub-personal."<sup>14</sup> Macmurray asserted that:

The definition of reason which seems to me most satisfactory is this. Reason is the capacity to behave consciously in terms of the nature of what is not ourselves. We can express this briefly by saying that reason is the capacity to behave in terms of the nature of the subject, that is to say behave objectively. Reason is thus our capacity for objectivity.<sup>15</sup>

The capacity for objectivity is the capacity to stand in conscious relation to that which is not ourselves and recognise it as such.

However, this does not constitute rationality; what constitutes rationality is the fact that on top of the consciousness of the relation of that which is not ourselves there is the additional factor that we must be conscious of the apprehension of what is not ourselves.<sup>16</sup>

Reason is then the capacity in man to stand in conscious relation to what is external to himself and to be able to recognise this relation.

Rationality involves all that enters into this relationship and this includes both the emotional aspect as well as the intellectual aspect.<sup>17</sup>

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12. Macmurray, John, "The Nature of Reason" PAS (1934-1935) Vol. XXXV p.143

13. Ibid p.144

14. IU p.128

15. RE p.19

16. IU pp.127-128

17. Bozzo, op. cit., p.205

The inclusion of the emotional aspect with the intellectual aspect of thinking is essential not only to Macmurray's conception of reflection, but to his basic understanding of reason. Macmurray assumed that reason is not only the awareness of the intellectual or cognitional side of thought, but also the emotional aspect of thought as well. Macmanus states that: "It is in recognising that immediate experience is a whole that is composed of these two elements that Macmurray is able to lay the foundation to develop his concept of the personal."<sup>18</sup> Macmurray was convinced that if one leaves out the emotional aspect of thought, that not only will this lead to the errors that are the result of intellectualism, but that the one-sidedness of intellectualism will destroy the community. Since communal living is necessary for the future of Man, Macmurray went to great lengths to point out the wider limits of reason.<sup>19</sup>

"Rationality is not a peculiar characteristic of the intellect. It is equally characteristic of the emotional life."<sup>20</sup> Macmurray argued that rationality cannot be reduced to just the intellect, but must include the emotional. The tradition, that was inherited from the Greeks and Romans contains deleterious influences, and leads one to regard the emotional life of man as dangerous. This in itself sets up a dualism that is not only unwanted, but also detrimental since it splits the whole of rationality into two separate parts, i.e. reason and emotion.<sup>21</sup> Macmurray averred that limiting man to the theoretical life is harmful, since one concentrates upon the theoretical and thereby neglects the experience of living.<sup>22</sup> Macmurray decried the influence

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18. Macmanus, op. cit., p.205

19. Ibid

20. IU p.131

21. Macmanus, op. cit., pp.60-61

22. Bozzo, op. cit., p.112

that is found in the Western tradition which stems from the dualism of the Stoics which divides Reason and Passion, which has an inbred prejudice against emotional involvement in action. Macmurray concluded that: "When this practical dualism becomes theoretical by the substitution of a theoretical for a practical intention, we generate the modern dualistic attitude in which reason is the unemotional and purely logical activity of the mind which produces knowledge; while emotion is the source of error through the prejudice which is inseparable from it."<sup>23</sup>

If one accepts Macmurray's definition that reason is the capacity for objectivity then one has to look more closely at the possibility of including emotion in the field covered by the term rational. Macmurray made the point that our feelings "refer to what is outside them, to some object about which they are felt, why should they not refer rightly or wrongly to their object just like thoughts?"<sup>24</sup> Macmurray assumed true thoughts to be those correctly referring to reality and false thoughts to be those that do not refer to the real nature of the object. Feelings have the same function, i.e. false feelings do not have any true relationship to the object to which they refer, while true feelings do correctly refer to the object to which they refer. These parallel definitions underlie Macmurray's assumption that reason and emotion are both part of the total field of rationality. Macmurray defined reason as the capacity for objectivity which is the capacity to stand in conscious relation to that which is outside of ourselves. Emotion shares this capacity to stand in conscious relation to that which is outside ourselves. Macmurray admitted that emotions are often likely to be subjective, but he also

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23. PR p.32

24. RE p.25



argued that the intellectual side of thought can be subjective. Thoughts as well as feelings can be true or false, depending whether or not they are properly related to the world to which they refer. Macmurray maintained that: "emotions are capable of exhibiting the quality of reason, that they may or may not fit the objective world to which they consciously refer".<sup>25</sup> The intellectual phase of reflection as well as the emotional phase of reflection are the only two phases of reflection open to the solitary agent according to Macmurray, and both have their inception in sense-perception. Macmurray defined the intellectual mode as "a generalised representation of the world as matter of fact; in the production of formulae which express the recurrent patterns of continuance of experience".<sup>26</sup> The emotional phase of reflection is defined as an activity of reflection which "moves towards a greater particularisation of the representation and by this it expresses a valuation of what is represented as an end in itself".<sup>27</sup>

Macmurray's assumption that reason is emotion and intellect implies that man is objectively conscious of an object both emotionally and intellectually. Furthermore, Macmurray maintained that the basic capacity of objectivity is found in the emotional, while the intellectual phase can be considered to be subsidiary to the emotional.<sup>28</sup> This point of view follows logically from Macmurray's epistemology which is based upon the assumption that immediate experience and human relationships lie at the centre of knowledge. Such knowledge is primarily

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25. IU p.132

26. SA p.198

27. SA pp.198-199

28. RE p.75



emotional since it is the feeling of the experience that initiates a person's awareness of the object of concern. From this emotional response stems intellectual knowledge, i.e. theoretical knowledge, which is dependent upon the emotional response, and is consequently subordinate to the emotional. The intellect guides and directs human activity, but emotion lies at the core and essence of human life.<sup>29</sup> Macmurray maintained that: "The emotional life is not simply a part of an aspect of human life. It is not, as we so often think subordinate, or subsidiary to the mind. It is the core and essence of human life. The intellect arises out of it, is rooted in it, draws its nourishment and sustenance from it, and is the subordinate partner in the human economy."<sup>30</sup>

As has been previously pointed out the cessation of action occurs with the beginning of reflection. Reflection is an activity, but a type of activity, consequently a part of experience, that does nothing to change the world, i.e. it is real in that it exists, but not active in terms of changing the existence of the world. Thought or reflection exist to overcome the obstacles that confront activity.<sup>31</sup>

Ideas and images can function in two different ways. They can serve as guides to perception or they can manipulate images or symbols in order to anticipate future events.<sup>32</sup> Images are reductions of the perceived objects, which may also include symbols which are reduced general images.<sup>33</sup> This means that one substitutes symbols for the unity

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29. Bozzo, op. cit., pp.253-255

30. RE p.75

31. Thomason, op. cit., p.146

32. IU pp.40-42

33. Thomason, op. cit., p.147

of the immediate experience to form a symbolic or conceptual relational unity or schema which represents the unity of immediate experience; Macmurray referred to this as a unity-pattern.<sup>34</sup> Thought is a matter of description and the manipulation of images which in turn tries to go beyond present events. Macmurray has stated that: "If I am in difficulty, for example, about how to achieve a certain end, I may suppose it achieved and then fill in, in imagination, the various steps which will connect my present situation with the situation which I have imagined."<sup>35</sup> Thought as supposal is not entirely free, however, to presuppose anything whatsoever. There are limits imposed on thought, which are derived from the unity-pattern, which has been derived from experience. Suppositions are limited by the unity-pattern, since one must return to action. This leads directly to the problems that surround verification of thought.<sup>36</sup> Macmurray in his analysis of reflection utilised three important concepts, which are symbolism, unity-pattern and verification.

A concept of importance is Macmurray's principle of verification. Since the purpose of thought is to return one to practical action<sup>37</sup>, verification of thought is primarily a return or referral to action. "Verification is primarily a return from thought to action, in order to find in the immediate experience of concrete activity a justification for accepting the conclusions which have been reached through the manipulation of ideas in the thought processes."<sup>38</sup> The implications are far reaching since it implies a distrust of speculative thought

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34. Kirkpatrick, op. cit., p.58

35. IU p.56

36. Thomason, op. cit., pp.149-150

37. Ibid p.150

38. IU p.74

which also infers that thought alone, however correct, cannot guarantee its own conclusions.<sup>39</sup> Another inference is that the testing of a conclusion may only be carried out in action. The implication is that action, even though it can disprove a conclusion, can never prove it, which has far reaching implications. Macmurray believed that all thought is rational and subject to verification, which applies not only to the sciences but also to all other intellectual endeavours including philosophy.<sup>40</sup> Verification, when viewed in terms of Macmurray's overall characterisation of thought, follows quite naturally since one is driven to thought at the beginning because of doubt arising from interrupted action, which causes one to manipulate ideas and images in such a way as to anticipate the consequences of possible actions in the future by means of various supposals. The whole exercise is carried out in order to return ultimately the thinker to action. The thinker's return to action and consequent verification or lack of verification of his conclusions are an integral part of the total schema.

Macmurray emphasised the practical function of thought, which is illustrated by his use of the terms 'adequate' and 'inadequate' when applied to thought as opposed to the use of the terms 'true' and 'false'. Macmurray stated that: "An idea or system of ideas cannot in itself be either true or false. But it can be adequate or inadequate to the function which it was designed to fulfil."<sup>41</sup> This is directly linked to Macmurray's assumption that knowledge "in so far as it is the result of the processes of reflection, does not involve certainty".<sup>42</sup> Macmurray

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39. IU p.75

40. Thomason, op. cit., pp.151-153

41. IU p.54

42. IU p.77

in using the terms 'adequate' and 'inadequate' removed the connotation of certainty which might result when using the terms 'true' and 'false'. Certainty can only be found in immediate or practical knowledge and never in theoretical knowledge, i.e. knowledge that comes from reflection. This applies to all thought even thought that is found to be adequate and is confirmed in action.<sup>43</sup> Macmurray stated that: "The failure of an experiment disproves the truth of the theory on which it was based, but the success of an experiment does not prove the truth of anything."<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, even though certainty is not possible for any theoretical conclusion, this does not mean that the verification of an idea from action by experiment in a particular situation does not supply a perfectly valid ground for an increasing confidence in our conclusion. The belief that an idea is adequate or true is subject to verification in the action of the self.<sup>45</sup> At the heart of Macmurray's epistemology is the concept that neither thought nor experiment can guarantee truth. Thought cannot provide knowledge that is certain and fixed; only immediate experience can in any possible way offer such guarantees. Thought provides only theoretical knowledge. The purpose of the verification or reflection is not to guarantee the truth of the assertion brought about by reflection, but to link reflection with action.<sup>46</sup> It must be pointed out that the principle of verification as proposed by Macmurray is considered to be tenuous by some since it is basically a theory of assent which is based upon Bishop Butler's idea of

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43. Kirkpatrick, op. cit., pp.62-63

44. IU p.76

45. Kirkpatrick, op. cit., p.63

46. Macmanus, op. cit., pp.36-37

converging probabilities, which is no more than a recognition of the fact that common sense is normally correct.<sup>47</sup>

There are, however, certain necessary aspects that one must attempt in order to make thought adequate, such as insuring that thought is internally non-contradictory. The laws and rules of logic attempt to bring about the internal unity of thought. This unity of thought is necessary since thought cannot hope to properly represent the unity of immediate experience without it.<sup>48</sup> Macmurray asserted that:

The absence of contradiction, the maintenance of consistency, the securing of strict implication in the relation of consecutive stages in the thought-process are all aspects of this effort to maintain the unity of structure in a system of ideas from which we start, through the whole process of activity until the conclusion is reached. The preservation of this structural unity is not a complete guarantee, as we shall see. But without it there is little likelihood that the conclusion will be true. Within the thought-process itself it is the only guarantee. All other guarantees lie beyond the process of thinking itself.<sup>49</sup>

The purpose of philosophy in Macmurray's view is to reflect and to express the unity of immediate experience. However, Macmurray laid stress upon the fact that no unity-pattern may ever reproduce wholly the unity of immediate experience, since reflective activity is only a fragment of reality as immediately experienced, and therefore can never hope to provide a complete representation of the wholeness of immediate experience. Nevertheless, even though the unity-pattern cannot give the wholeness of the immediate experience it does play an essential role in thought. The unity-pattern is a stimulant to thought since a set of symbols alone cannot in itself lead to new

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47. Ibid p.208 .

48. Kirkpatrick, op. cit., p.58

49. IU p.60

ideas, but needs to operate within some schema, form or set of relationships in order to be productive.<sup>50</sup> This schema must be presupposed and this is the unity-pattern.

Unity-patterns serve as a way for one to interpret the world and one's self and the interaction between the two. Macmurray has offered us three types of unity-pattern. The first two types are the traditional ones, that are to be found in modern philosophy. The first and foremost of these unity-patterns is the mathematical or mechanical unity-pattern or model.<sup>51</sup> The mathematical unity-pattern "arises from the necessity of manipulating physical objects and is, therefore, adapted to the representation of reality so far as reality is stuff to be used, or to put it more technically, so far as reality is material".<sup>52</sup> The second unity-pattern in terms of which the world and experience has been interpreted is the organic or biological unity-pattern,<sup>53</sup> which bases its conception not on the material but upon growth and life. Macmurray wrote about the organic unity-pattern that: "it is in the phenomena of life, and particularly in the processes of growth, that this spontaneity of inner self-determination directed development seems, at least to be characteristically manifest. Its key-concept is not substance, but organism, and its problem is the form of the organic."<sup>54</sup> The organic unity is felt<sup>55</sup> as opposed to the calculation of the mathematical unity.

The third unity-pattern is that of the personal, which Macmurray considered to be a better alternative than the mechanical or organic

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50. Macmanus, op. cit., pp.28-32

51. Haddox, Michael Bruce, "Action and Religious Knowledge: The Person as Agent in the Thought of John Macmurray. (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis; Duke University, 1970) pp.52-53

52. IU p.85

53. Haddox, op. cit., p.59

54. SA p.33

55. IU p.110



unity-patterns, since these unity-patterns inadequately represent the experience of personality. Macmurray maintained that the mathematical and organic unity-patterns failed to represent the world properly since neither of them adequately represent personality which is the focus of immediate experience.<sup>56</sup> Macmurray argued for the inclusion of the thinker within the unity-pattern, thereby making this unity-pattern closer to the unity of immediate experience. "It is only when we reflect upon our experience of persons that we ourselves, including our activity of reflection, come into the picture. So long as we are reflecting upon matter or life, we ourselves, as persons stand outside the aspect of reality towards which our thought is directed."<sup>57</sup> Since thoughts about ourselves enter into the reflective experience, the unity-pattern meant for life and material is no longer adequate. This is a clear re-statement of Macmurray's basic ternary modes of apperception with the personal and religious posited as the primary mode or unity-pattern.

The unity-pattern is essential for reflection, but the unity-pattern in turn provides only a form or pattern for symbols. Symbols come not only from the reduction of images, but from a generalised reduced image. Macmurray averred that: "In a wide sense of the term, all images may be said to be symbols since they are substitutes for the things of which they are images. But usually we employ the word in a narrower sense, to mean something that represents another thing without having an obvious resemblance to it."<sup>58</sup> Words are symbols<sup>59</sup>

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56. Haddox, op. cit., pp.69-70

57. IU pp.124-125

58. IU pp.44-45

59. IU p.46



which can be said to be both general and reduced images. The value of symbolic representation combined with a schema or unity-pattern is that it provides for the self at the moment of withdrawal from action with a set of ideas that can be manipulated in various ways without disturbing the order of the world.<sup>60</sup>

The courses of action, that are purposed by the manipulation of the symbols, that are logically connected or held together by an internal unity-pattern, represent the unity of the self's experiences, which makes up theoretical knowledge, which is different from the immediate or practical knowledge that is gained from immediate experience without any reflective activity being involved.<sup>61</sup> Macmurray held that one too easily identifies reason with our capacity for knowledge.<sup>62</sup> One, therefore, has knowledge in action, which is our primary knowledge,<sup>63</sup> and knowledge that comes from reflection.

The process of abstraction is also conceived of in terms of the reduction of images into symbols.<sup>64</sup> This reduction of images can be called a focusing of attention on what is common to or similar to several images. Macmurray maintained that this "selectiveness of attention underlies and accounts for those characteristics of reflective activity which are traditionally referred to as 'abstraction' and 'generalisation'. Reflective abstraction is a negative 'taking away', a taking away which in fact takes nothing away.<sup>65</sup>

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60. Kirkpatrick, op. cit., p.60

61. Ibid

62. CS p.36

63. SA p.169

64. IU p.43

65. SA p.173

A central area of interest for Macmurray was the connection between religion and reason. Macmurray did define religion in terms of reason as "the reflective aspect of a universal human experience, the experience of living in relation to one another".<sup>66</sup> Religion is the universalisation of the central factors of human experience, which means that: "religion is the primary expression of reason in human life".<sup>67</sup> Nephew summarises Macmurray's position as maintaining that: "the rationality of man is the foundation of religion, and it is through his rationality that man can construct a personal life which is fulfilling, a life style which is fulfilling for the individual and for the society".<sup>68</sup> Religious reflection is a withdrawal from activity as is all reflection, but it withdraws to seek the solution to the problem of mutuality.<sup>69</sup> Religion as reflective activity aims at the practical action of bringing people together.<sup>70</sup>

Religion is the primary and the fullest expression of rationality more so than either science or art. Religion is more comprehensive as an expression of rationality because "the relation of a person to other persons defines a limited field, it is a field in which the object includes all general factors in our experience".<sup>71</sup> It is only in the full relation of one person to another that rationality can completely express its own nature. Macmurray understood religion as

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66. SRE p.48

67. SRE p.54

68. Nephew, Albert Henry, "Philosophy is Theology: The Nature and Function of Philosophy According to John Macmurray" (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: Marquette University, 1970) p.111

69. Ibid p.112

70. Thomason, op. cit., p.209

71. RE p.197

an expression of rationality in its fullest sense as well as being "the drive to achieve rationality in our relations with our fellows".<sup>72</sup> Since reason is primarily practical, one finds in the field of personal relationships the expression of rationality which is to be discovered in the behaviour of men and women with one another.<sup>73</sup> Macmurray again has asserted as he did when discussing religion in terms of experience and the various modes of reflection, that religion is central. The central theme is that: "reason as religion must restore that community of Nature and reintegrate man with man and mankind with Nature, at a higher level. Within this task fall the other expressions of human rationality, and only in their relation to it can they have any significance".<sup>74</sup> Macmurray is again reiterating the central theme that places the concepts of religion and community at the focus of his philosophy.

When one assumes that religion arises out of the primary fact of the mutuality of personal relationships, then there are, according to Macmurray, certain facts that must follow. The first is that religion as a primary fact of human existence cannot be separated into a single compartment isolated from the rest of human existence. Religious reflective activity is primarily a practical activity since it aims to bring persons into communion with one another, which implies that everyone must be included since religious reflection must be carried on by each individual in his communion with others.<sup>75</sup> Macmurray under-

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72. RE p.199

73. RE p.211

74. CS p.40

75. Thomason, op. cit., pp.208-209

scored the central position of religion and community when he asserted that: "the key to the nature of personality, and so of reason, lies then, in the nature of friendship".<sup>76</sup>

Macmurray understood the mutuality of human relationships to be the key difference between the relation between subject and object and between person and person. Macmurray asserted that: "since the activity of relation between persons is mutual, the primary aspect of religious reflection is also mutual. Since the primary activity of any form of reflection is the expression of the given fact, the primary activity of religious reflection is the mutual expression of the experience of mutual relationship."<sup>77</sup> The symbols of religious reflection are the symbols of community,<sup>78</sup> which denote the mutual relationships within the community, and for that matter the mutuality of the community as a whole. Rationality for Macmurray is disclosed in his analysis of personal mutuality, which includes both the emotive and intellectual types of reason, which finds the interpersonal life of the community to be its primary field of activity. At the highest reaches of rationality one finds the capacity for self-transcendence and the accompanying desire to centre one's concern around another. Macmurray's radical heterocentric approach is compatible with Christian teachings, since selfishness and self-interest are seen as signs of immaturity and consequently of failure in the attainment of rationality.<sup>79</sup>

The two main thrusts of Macmurray's understanding of reason are in terms of reason as a whole, i.e. as both emotional and intellectual.

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76. IU p.134

77. SRE p.65

78. SRE p.66

79. Bozzo, op. cit., pp.270-272

Macmurray not only understood reason to be a fairly wide and all-encompassing term for thought and feeling, but he also anchored the whole of thought by attaching it firmly to action. The overall practical approach of Macmurray towards rationality fits in with the central theme of religion and interpersonal relations.

## CHAPTER 6

God as The Transcendent Other

In order to truly understand Macmurray's concept of religion, one needs to examine his thinking about God. Macmurray's thinking about the idea of God revolves around several factors, which are necessarily influenced by elements of his rather singular epistemological approach and particularly by his emphasis upon the concept of the personal which leads to Macmurray's singular assumption that the primary mode of reflective rationality is religion.<sup>1</sup> One would expect the primary concern of religious reflection to be with the knowledge of God or in Macmurray's nomenclature the universal personal Other. The data for this reflection comes from the immediate experience of the mutuality of personal relationships. Religious reflection as in the case of all reflection arises from a failure in action. Macmurray posited that religious reflection "arises from a failure in personal relationships, and its reference, as a symbolic activity, is to personal relationship". Macmurray took this a step further by arguing that religious reflection "aims at knowledge of the personal Other in mutual relation with oneself; it is for the sake of the life of active personal relationship; its function is, therefore, to understand the reason for the failure so that the relationship may be resumed in a way that will avoid failure in the future".<sup>2</sup> Religious reflection universalises its problems by making use of the idea of a universal person to whom all agents stand in an individual relationship. The universal person is "the idea of God, and religious knowledge is rightly described as the knowledge of God. Such knowledge will apply universally to all instances of personal relationship".<sup>3</sup>

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1. PR p.167

2. PR p.168

3. PR p.169



Macmurray rejected the traditional idea of God and in particular the one to be found in the traditional philosophical proofs of God's existence.<sup>4</sup> Macmurray maintained that: "The God of the traditional proofs is not the God of religion".<sup>5</sup> The God represented in the 'traditional proofs' rests upon a dualism of thought and action which Macmurray vehemently rejected.

One of Macmurray's most fundamental epistemological assumptions is that knowledge presupposes experience. Something must be at least capable of being directly or indirectly experienced in some way if one is to understand it. The idea of God as developed by Macmurray can be experienced or is at least capable of being experienced.<sup>6</sup> Kirkpatrick maintains that the experience of God "is primarily the experience of standing in relation to a universal personal Other".<sup>7</sup> The idea of God is an idea of the Other which one should be able to conceive of as being experienced in some way,<sup>8</sup> or it will not be possible to have knowledge of God since knowledge presupposes experience. Macmurray did not discuss the explicit experience of God beyond his description of the experience of the Other which is an experience that is found in personal relationships. Macmurray spoke of the experience of God as being one that is founded upon the experience of mutuality. Macmurray stated that: "In religion is the mutuality between the self and another which is the object of reflection. The universal, therefore, must be a universal person to whom the self stands in universal relation. The idea of God

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4. PR p.206

5. PR p.207

6. Kirkpatrick, Frank Gloyd, "The Idea of God in the Thought of John Macmurray" (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: Brown University, 1970) p.80

7. Ibid p.81

8. Ibid p.82

as the universal Other is, therefore, inherent in the act of religious reflection".<sup>9</sup> Macmurray maintained that the universal Other could not be denied since it exists in experience and to deny the universalisation of the concept of the Other would be to deny the act of reflection. "The universal cannot be denied, since to deny it would be to forbid the act of reflection, while it is only through the act of reflection that the denial is possible. The existence of God cannot, therefore, be rationally denied, since it cannot be denied without self-contradiction."<sup>10</sup>

There are several implications that one can draw from Macmurray's epistemological principles which can be applied to the concept of the experience of God. The first of these implications is that the experience of God must be related to the self's other experiences.<sup>11</sup> This is derived from Macmurray's assumption that all experiences are a unity, which is to say that the experiences of a person are not made up of many different parts but have a wholeness or a completeness which is only broken by reflection.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, this also implies the interrelation of all experiences,<sup>13</sup> and consequently that the experience of God is related to all other experiences. The conceptual representation of experience must itself strive to be a unity, since the concepts represent a unity namely the unity of experience. The idea of God or

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9. SRE p.80

10. Ibid

11. Kirkpatrick, op. cit., p.87

12. IU p.23

13. Kirkpatrick, op. cit., p.90

the experienced universal Other must, therefore, be represented with a unified schema or matrix.<sup>14</sup> Kirkpatrick points out that this implies that the idea of God under consideration could be subject to the principles of logic.<sup>15</sup> The criteria of conceptual unity does not prove an idea, or for that matter the testing of any idea does not totally verify it, however, it does give reasonable grounds for belief, and it is in Macmurray's nomenclature an adequate idea. The theoretical knowledge of God and the manipulation of the idea of God adheres to the same rules and criteria which are applicable to the development of any idea.<sup>16</sup> This does not mean that God, himself, is subject to the rules and criteria of the development of ideas, but only that our conception of God is subject to these principles of logic. The idea of God like all other types of theoretical knowledge is subject to verification by immediate experience. The idea of God is constantly modified by the change in one's knowledge of any experienced Other and is also limited by possible future experiences of God.<sup>17</sup>

Macmurray's understanding of God revolves around the idea of the Other. Macmurray universalises the idea of the Other or the Thou of the 'I-Thou' relation and labels this God.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, the concept of the Other is important to the understanding of Macmurray's conception of God. As has been noted self-realisation is dependent upon a relation with another, which shows the importance of the Other. Macmurray maintained that: "behaviour is incomplete without a response from one another", and he declared that: "this primary and distinctive character

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14. Ibid p.92-93

15. Ibid p.93

16. Ibid p.94-95

17. Ibid p.96-98

18. SA p.72

of personal behaviour we shall refer to hereafter as the mutuality of the personal. It is what we mean when we say that the personal is constituted by the relation of persons. The reference to the personal Other is constitutive for all personal existence".<sup>19</sup> The basic characteristic of the Other is further underlined when Macmurray argued that: "If we did not know that there are other persons we could know literally nothing, not even that we ourselves existed. To be a person is to be in communication with the Other. The knowledge of the Other is the absolute presupposition of all knowledge, and as such is necessarily indemonstrable".<sup>20</sup> The knowledge of the Other is the basic knowledge which enables us to become persons which in turn makes us able to act, reflect and know. Since the knowledge of the Other is a priori to all things that make up the person than it cannot be demonstrated by using such things which themselves are based upon the knowledge of the Other, e.g. reflection.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, Macmurray considered the knowledge of the Other to be beyond the reach of deduction and demonstration, although it is certainly a part of immediate experience.

Macmurray in his examination of the concept of the Other declared that: "My first discrimination of the Other is into a number of different persons all of whom are in communication with me and with one another. The Other acquires the character of a community of which I am a member".<sup>22</sup> The primordial relationship with the Other begins with the mother-child relationship. The baby lives from the very beginning in relation to others. The important philosophical point is that one

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19. PR p.69

20. PR p.77

21. Haddox, Michael Bruce, "Action and Religious Knowledge: The Person as Agent in the Thought of John Macmurray" (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: Duke University, 1970) p.147

22. PR p.77

cannot see the structure of personal existence in terms of the individual, i.e. as if the person was not a separate entity.<sup>23</sup>

Another basic assumption that one can infer from Macmurray's conception of the Other is that knowledge of the levels of reality issues from our basic knowledge of persons, which differs from the normal assumption that reality is known from the physical, organic and personal in that order.<sup>24</sup>

One of Macmurray's basic philosophical principles is that one interacts with immediate experience which is a unity. Therefore, the Other must not only be a part of the unity, but also personal,<sup>25</sup> since it is irrational not to assume that the other is an agent, i.e. that the Other acts intentionally in relation to the self as agent. Macmurray concluded that:

In action, I know that I exist as agent, and that the Other exists as resistance and support of my action. The rule governing the process through which I seek to determine the character of the Other is this: I must determine myself and the Other reciprocally, by means of the same categories. Whatever formal character I ascribe to the Other, I must ascribe to myself, and vice versa. If I determine the Other merely as body, I must determine myself merely as body; if as a system of energy, then I must determine myself reciprocally as a system of energy. But I know that the energy I exert in action is intentionally determined, and this I express by saying that I am an agent who does things, and whose acts are not merely events which happen. Consequently I must characterise the Other in the same terms, as an agent acting intentionally in relation to me. If I determine myself as agent and the world as a system of energy which is impersonal, then I conclude, irrationally, that I am the only agent, and that I am not part of the world in which I act.<sup>26</sup>

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23. Haddox, op. cit., pp.147-148

24. Ibid, p.149

25. Mooney, Philip, "The Notion of Religion in John Macmurray"  
(Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: Fordham University, 1972)  
p.186

26. PR pp.220-221

The other that I encounter is not only personal, but also part of the whole of immediate experience. Macmurray reasoned that in man's immediate experience of other persons he comes into contact with God as the "infinite of the personal".<sup>27</sup>

The basic position that Macmurray maintained is that the universal Other that one encounters in immediate experience is the 'infinite of the personal' which is God. Macmurray universalised one's interactions with other persons beyond the interaction with a community of persons. Macmurray assumed that: "The immediate experience of personality is the experience of infinite personality in finite persons, and so it is the experience of God as the personal absolute, as the unity of persons in relationship; it is the knowledge of that personality 'in whom we live and move and have our being' as St Paul put it long ago".<sup>28</sup> The interaction with the other is the primary point of self-realisation for Macmurray as well as the primordial experience in our lives. He took this a step further when he included the assumption that: "God as infinite personality is the primary natural experience of all persons. One might almost say, if it were not for the traditional limitations of language, that God is the first perception".<sup>29</sup> This conception reappears in a slightly different form when Macmurray pointed out that our dependence upon what is not ourselves is the "core of our reality".<sup>30</sup>

Man encounters God in the experience of the finite relationships. Man meets God at the personal level through the reciprocal mutuality of the personal.<sup>31</sup> However, the generalisation and universalisation

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27. Mooney, op. cit., p.185

28. IU p.138

29. RE p.228

30. RE p.219

31. Mooney, op. cit., p.191



of these relations within a community of persons or group of persons leads to Macmurray's basic conception of God. This is easily seen in his use of the terms 'the infinite Personal' and 'the universal Other'. Both of the terms stem from Macmurray's belief that all knowledge is centred around the mutuality of the personal. The recognition of the interdependence of people is at the very centre of Macmurray's conception of God, which as the infinite personal, stems from man's encounter with the finite personal. The existence of God cannot be questioned, since the infinite of the personal is continuously disclosed through the experience of finite relationships which cannot be denied. This is illustrated by Macmurray's understanding of the concept of incarnation.<sup>31</sup> Macmurray stated that:

God is the term which symbolises the infinite apprehended as personal, and it derives, as indeed it must, from our immediate experience of the infinite in finite persons. The idea of incarnation, which in one form or other appears in all immediate religions, merely expresses the fact that our awareness of the personal infinite comes to us, and can only come, in and through our awareness of finite personality.<sup>32</sup>

For Macmurray the conception of God provides the basis of all personal relationships, and has a further function that is of importance, which is the idea of God as symbol.

If one once again harks back to Macmurray's epistemological principles one should recall that the purpose of reflection is the reduction of images into symbols and the consequent manipulation of those symbols.<sup>33</sup> The whole aim of reflection is to reconstruct the wholeness of experience by the use of symbols within a matrix. The

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31. Mooney, op. cit., p.191

32. IU p.124

33. IU p.44



purpose of religious experience is to recover the wholeness of the personal experience. The symbol of God is the universal symbol of the Other, i.e. the infinite personal, which is the universal symbol of the accumulation of personal relations.

The notion of God arises when the self intends to represent symbolically the unity of the community.<sup>34</sup> Macmurray queried the formal representation of community. "How can a universal mutuality of intentional and active relationship be represented symbolically?"<sup>35</sup> Macmurray concluded that: "only through the idea of a personal Other who stands in the same mutual relation to every member of the community. Without the idea of such a universal and personal Other it is impossible to represent the unity of a community of persons, each in personal fellowship with all others".<sup>36</sup> Kirkpatrick poses a crucial question: "Is this referent to be thought of as merely the community itself, or as an ideal set of ends, or is it to be thought of as some Other who stands over against the community?"<sup>37</sup> The symbol must at least hypothesise an existent reality behind the symbol,<sup>38</sup> since without the assumption of a real person behind the symbol one is attempting to manipulate and understand an avowed empirical reality using a non-empirical symbol. Kirkpatrick concluded that the concept of the Other in relation to the self does not mean the self in relation with the community. "It is not possible to think of the unity of relationship through the symbol of community itself as if the self could think of its relation to community as a relation to some Other. Community as

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35. PR p.164

36. Ibid

37. Kirkpatrick, op. cit., p.145

38. Ibid, p.147

such is not an Other, even though it can act as a single intention."<sup>39</sup> Kirkpatrick goes even further and concludes that the intention of the community can only be determined and grounded in and by the idea of the Other over against the community as a whole.<sup>40</sup> The next question of course revolves around the idea of the Other as to the Person of the Other. Can the Other be more than an idea; can it be represented as a symbol, as an actual experience of an actual person? Some would argue that the Other is not only personal but is a person.<sup>41</sup>

If one looks closely at the principles of Macmurray's epistemology it causes one to realise that one cannot experience the Other as 'the personal' or as 'personhood', since both of these terms are abstractions. Since the universal Other must be in reciprocal relation and since this cannot be an abstraction, it must be as a person. The highest category the self has for categorising its experiences including that of the Other is the Personal category. Therefore, one would expect the Other to only be experienced and known fully in terms of the personal. Since the Other is always considered to be the basic and the highest category of interpretation, the personal category is the one in which one would experience, act with and reflect upon the Other. Since one cannot think in terms of the personal with a Person, it is consistent to see the experience of the Other as an experience with a Person. Since persons can be experienced directly and indirectly the self can therefore experience God.<sup>42</sup>

Macmurray as has been pointed out, rejected the conception of God that is to be found in the 'God of the traditional proofs'. Macmurray also objected to the form of question that leads one to postulate

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39. Ibid, p.150

40. Ibid, p.151

41. Ibid, p.158

42. Ibid, pp.160-166

the 'God of the traditional proofs';<sup>43</sup> the question being "does God exist?"<sup>44</sup> Macmurray considered the expression of the question to be in the wrong form; he wished it to be expressed in the form "Is what exists personal?" A more complete form of the question would read "Is the universal Other from which the community of persons distinguishes itself, and which is the same for all persons, a personal or an impersonal Other?"<sup>45</sup> An even more generalised form of the question has to do with whether the world is personal or impersonal, i.e. all things which are beyond ourselves. "For the difference between a personal conception of the world and an impersonal one is a difference of apperception, and modes of apperception may be more or less adequate."<sup>46</sup> Macmurray concluded that impersonal apperception was inadequate since it only dealt with "what simply happens, as opposed to the personal which deals with what is done".<sup>47</sup> Actions are the realisation of intentions, whereas events are from causes. If one conceives of the world as a series of events which has no intention then one falls into self-contradiction, since persons are a part of the world and they have intention behind their acts, while events do not. Macmurray averred that:

There is, then, only one way in which we can think our relation to the world, and that is to think it as a personal relation, through the form of the personal. We must think that the world is one action, and that its impersonal aspect is the negative aspect of this unity of action, contained in it, subordinated within it, and necessary to its constitution. To conceive

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43. PR p.207

44. PR p.215

45. PR p.215

46. PR p.216

47. PR p.221

the world thus is to conceive it as the act of God, the creator of the world, and ourselves as created agents, with a limited and dependent freedom to determine the future, which can be realised only on the condition that our intentions are in harmony with His intention, and which must frustrate itself if they are not.<sup>48</sup>

Macmurray also noted that such a conception is fully theistic as well as religious, and goes on to point out that pantheism is only an extension of the organic conception of the world and has nothing to do with the personal, i.e. religious, conception of the world.<sup>49</sup>

The final notion of Macmurray that needs to be examined is his conception of God as Agent which follows from the conception of God as Person. Macmurray assumed that a person to be a person must also be an agent.<sup>50</sup> The notion of an agent and person are abstract concepts when applied to the self. The notion of the self as agent is an abstract concept which sets forth the implications of acting. The notion of a person on the other hand is an abstraction introduced to deal with the self in relation to other selves. The dual conception of the self goes another step by introducing the fact that the abstract concept of agent is away from other selves, while person is in terms of other selves.<sup>51</sup> Macmurray did not directly speak of the contrast between God as Agent and God as Person, but Kirkpatrick in his study commented that: "God as Person would then refer to the God who, as an Agent, has acted in such a way that He has revealed a particular character or 'personality'. The concept of God as Agent would refer to what God must be in order for Him to be able to reveal himself in this particular way".<sup>52</sup> Macmurray stated that: "The universal Other

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48. PR p.222

49. PR p.223

50. Kirkpatrick, op. cit., p.191

51. Ibid, pp.192-194

52. Ibid, p.195

must be represented as a universal Agent whose action unifies the actions of every member of the community, and whose continuing intention is the unity of all their several intentions".<sup>53</sup> This introduces the concept of God as the unifier of the intentions of the community. Since a community is made up of persons in relation there needs to be a way to unify the intentions of the persons without negating the freedom of any of the persons.<sup>54</sup> The notion of God as Agent arises when the unity of intentions within the community needs to be symbolically represented.<sup>55</sup> The universal Agent then not only symbolises the unity of intention, but also has to be thought of as having the power to control the world in which his actions take place to such an extent that his intentions will be realised.<sup>56</sup>

Macmurray has always understood the idea of God to be central to the conception of religion and religious reflection. Macmurray very early in his writings stated that:

The whole of religion is rooted in the idea of God. It seeks and claims to find experience of God, both theoretically as knowledge, and practically, as fellowship and communion. However varied may be the diversities of religious belief and of religious practice, however many coloured and motley the conceptions of the nature of the Divine, all religion centres in the practical belief that supreme reality is God.<sup>57</sup>

Macmurray not surprisingly puts God into the centre of all things that are religious. The symbol of religious reflection is God. God is the term that symbolises the immediate experience of the infinite apprehended as the personal universal agent.<sup>58</sup> That is to say God is

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53. PR p. 164

54. Kirkpatrick, op. cit., p.196

55. Ibid, p.197

56. Ibid, p.208

57. Macmurray, John, "Objectivity in Religion" in Adventure: The Faith of Science and the Science of Faith, ed. Streeter, Burnet H. (New York: Macmillan, 1928) hereafter cited as OR, p.181

58. Mooney, op. cit., p.85

not only someone that one can be in relation to, but also someone that acts and whose intentions can be recognised as being behind those acts. For Macmurray religion claimed that: "the supreme and only absolute reality of the universe is a personal God,...."<sup>59</sup>

God is not only a symbol of interpersonal relations, but is a unity-symbol of the infinite personal that represents the unity of all men in personal relationships.<sup>60</sup> Macmurray stated that: "God is the unity of the whole; and making that knowledge real because God is individual and concrete --- the absolute of personality."<sup>61</sup>

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59. OR p.214

60. Mooney, op. cit., pp.85-86

61. RE p.192

CHAPTER 7

Jesus Christ as Religious Genius



Macmurray's understanding of God centres upon personal relations, mutuality and reciprocity, i.e. those things that are the core of community. Macmurray's perception of Jesus Christ, one can assume, should also follow the same path and concentrate on personal relationships and community.

Mooney assumed that Macmurray's notion of religion finds its ultimate verification in the immediate experience of Jesus of Nazareth. Macmurray's notion of religion, which emphasises the heterocentric motivation and intention necessary to inter-personal action, is mirrored in his interpretation of Jesus' life, mission and teachings.<sup>1</sup> One must also keep in mind that Macmurray's view of Christ was deeply affected by his desire to synthesise Christianity and Marxism. Consequently, in some works such as Ten Modern Prophets, Macmurray's interpretation of the religion of Jesus is labelled as a 'creative, revolutionary type'. However, Macmurray's interpretation of Jesus was basically a communal view.

The religious spirit meant to Jesus the intention to create through love, a universal human fellowship of free creative persons. Jesus taught that it was God's purpose to create, through the agency of loving service of individual human beings, such a universal fellowship, which would be the kingdom of God on earth. Jesus never for a moment doubted that God's purpose would be achieved. Hence the apocalyptic element of Christ's teaching, the confident prophecies of the redemption of human society. The special importance which Macmurray attaches to Christian as compared to Greek and Eastern teaching is based on his belief that we do not find in Greek or Eastern thought any such expression as we find in Jesus' teaching of the intention to create a universal human fellowship or any such belief that such a fellowship can be achieved.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Mooney, Philip, "The Notion of Religion in John Macmurray"  
(Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: Fordham University, 1972)  
p.226

2. Coates, J.B., Ten Modern Prophets (London: Frederick Muller Ltd., 1944) p.106

For Macmurray the ideas of Jesus revolve around the concepts of personal relations, reciprocity, fellowship and communal relations.

Jesus' origins were firmly rooted in the Hebraic tradition and He expanded upon them. He was the type of religious genius that discovered certain basic truths. These truths, according to Macmurray, have to do with the relationships between men.

Macmurray defined Christianity in terms of Jesus' life and works.

It is what Jesus did to human history by his life and death rather than what he said about it that matters when we come to define Christianity. His works consists not in what he told men they ought to do but in what he did to men. Christianity is primarily the movement which Jesus founded rather than the doctrines that he taught, and one of the reasons why such controversy can arise over the interpretation of his teachings is that he was well aware of this, and behaved accordingly.<sup>3</sup>

This is in direct agreement with Macmurray's assumption that action proceeds reflection. Macmurray fundamentally believed that Jesus' teachings are best understood in terms of the community of believers that evolved from his life and work, i.e. his activities. Macmurray's interpretation of Jesus' work, in terms of the community he founded, closely follows Macmurray's belief that the communal is primary, whereas the doctrinal part of religion is secondary. This underscores once again the importance of the concept of community in Macmurray's philosophy.

Macmurray explained Jesus' fundamental teachings in terms of the one to one 'I-Thou' mutual relationship between two persons. Macmurray interpreted Jesus' teachings as a view of human society which was "based neither on the blood-relationships of natural affinity, nor on the organised relationships of political or ecclesiastical groupings, but simply on the practical sharing of life between any two individuals on a basis of their common humanity".<sup>4</sup> Macmurray explained Jesus'

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3. CH p.4

4. CS p.67

conception of the world in terms of the pure 'I-Thou' relationship which is devoid of the intricate and over-complicated web of social and impersonal relationships.

Macmurray viewed Jesus not in terms of an isolated individual confronting the problems of mankind, but as the culmination of events and the climax of Hebrew History, i.e. as part of the Hebrew community. Macmurray believed consequently that: "Christianity is essentially Jewish".<sup>5</sup> Macmurray asserted that: "Jesus is at once the culmination of Jewish prophecy and the source of Christianity".<sup>6</sup> It was in Jesus that the development of Jewish culture was completed and the concomitant development of Hebrew experience into a universal force in human history.<sup>7</sup> "It was in Jesus that Judaism became a universal religion through the discovery of its implications, and this discovery was the culmination of a long process of historical development."

Macmurray certainly understood and interpreted Jesus' life in terms of the Hebraic prophetic tradition. Macmurray viewed Jesus as "a Jewish Prophet, knowing the function of a prophet was to understand more deeply and to express more effectively the meaning of the prophetic tradition".<sup>9</sup> Macmurray's conviction that Jesus was the culmination of the Hebraic Prophetic tradition directs once again one's attention to Macmurray's underlying dependence upon the concept of community and personal relations in his explanation of religion and the religion of Jesus.

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5. CH p.16

6. CH p.42

7. CH p.42

8. CS p.59

9. Macmurray, John, "The Philosophy of Jesus" Quaker Monthly, (Jan 1978) Vol.52:1, p.11 cited hereafter as QM

Macmurray held that:

Unlike the Greek and European Philosophies, which are theoretical, Hebrew thought would yield a practical philosophy. Its central problem would be the problem of evil, not of knowledge. It would also be a personal philosophy, in which persons are agents, and since an agent must have an 'other', they are necessarily in relation. As persons in relation, they form communities which have a moral structure. The ultimate reality must be a personal infinite, that is, God; and in a philosophy of action, he must be the absolute agent. This means that he is the beginning and the end; as the beginning he is the creator, both of the finite agents and of the world in which they live; as the end, he is the personal unity of the achieved community of agents.<sup>10</sup>

Hebrew tradition and thought depended upon a clear idea of social history, i.e. of community action. Religion for Macmurray can only be understood in terms of the events that take place within community. Although Macmurray held that the Jews looked to history, he also realised that: "the Jews never lost the sense of family relationships as the basis of society."<sup>11</sup> Jewish society can consequently be understood only in terms of community not in terms of society and nationality. Therefore, Macmurray maintained that: "We understand Jesus as the fully mature expression of the Jewish consciousness; as the final unfolding, in clear consciousness, of the implications of the Hebrew conception of the significance of social history".<sup>12</sup>

Macmurray held that Jesus noticed no difference between social organisation and religion since the main characteristic of the Jewish religious conscious is that the distinction between the social and the religious does not arise. "It is an integral consciousness, for which social history is the content of religious reality. Jesus, like any of

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10. QM p.10

11. CH p.34

12. CH p.43

the Hebrew prophets, could not make a religious assertion without making a demand upon social behaviour."<sup>13</sup>

Macmurray's insistence upon the communal aspect of the Hebrew Tradition is clearly apparent in his assertion that:

... the process of Hebrew development became the process of discovering the spiritual basis of human community. We can trace in the succession of the Hebrew prophets the gradual deepening of the conception of social righteousness, not as an abstract ideal but as the structure of inner relationship between men which creates and maintains the community of social life, and which is the basis of all social fulfillment. The culmination of this development of real religion from its primitive immaturity was the work of Jesus. In him Hebrew religion came finally to self-consciousness, and the inherent meaning of the demand of religious reason was recognised.<sup>14</sup>

Macmurray not only wrote about Jesus in terms of Hebraic tradition, but also in terms of what might be called a religious genius. Macmurray in one of his earliest essays used the term 'spiritual genius' when referring to a person who had disclosed the singular and distinctive characteristics that were exhibited by Jesus in his life and work.<sup>15</sup> Macmurray asserted that Jesus was a religious genius who lead the Hebrew community to self-consciousness.

Here lies the task of the religious genius. He is the individual in whom the consciousness of the meaning of religion is achieved at any stage in human development and through whom it is mediated and made available to humanity as a whole. He is indeed the mediator between God and man. He is the interpreter to any society of men on the stage of community which they have achieved. He is the Word that expresses, and so realises in consciousness, for others as well as for himself, the meaning of the religious impulse as it has expressed itself in the creation of community. That consciousness, that expression in the world of the prophet, is the condition of any further advance in the achievement of community. It turns mere community into conscious community of communion, and in doing so sets life free for a fuller achievement. But now the condition of this further achievement depends not

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13. CH p.43

14. CS p.61

15. Macmurray, John "Objectivity in Religion" Adventure: The Faith of Science and the Science of Faith ed. B.H. Streeter (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1928) p.205, hereafter cited as Adven



merely upon the consciousness of the religious genius, but upon the sharing of that consciousness by his society. ... His experience has to become a shared experience, the common experience of the society. ... In becoming conscious of the significance of the community which has been realised in his own society, the religious genius removes the limitations of its particularity, and makes it available, not merely for his own but for a wider society. In the development of religion as a whole, there comes a point at which the full significance of the religious impulse is realised by one individual human being, and so becomes universally available for all men. He can then realise consciously -- in idea -- the complete nature of the religious life, the full meaning of the religious impulse in man. This, to my mind, is the significance of the personality of Jesus in history. He was the religious genius who realised the meaning of the community achieved through their history by his own people -- the Hebrew race; and in realising it he made available the universal meaning of religion for all time and for all people.<sup>16</sup>

Macmurray considered Jesus to have been a religious genius that made certain religious discoveries that He shared with the society in which he lived. "The discovery which Jesus made was the discovery that human life is personal."<sup>17</sup> "It is the self-discovery of his own essence as a human being and, therefore, the discovery of the essence of humanity."<sup>18</sup> Macmurray went on to point out that: "the discovery of the essence of humanity is the discovery, not merely of what human life ought to be, but of what human life will be when the work of God in history is completed."<sup>19</sup> Macmurray believed that: "Jesus discovered the intention of God for man, which is the end of the process of history, the Kingdom of Heaven which is to be established on earth".<sup>20</sup> However, how does Jesus translate the essence of humanity into concrete terms? "Jesus defines the nature of human life both negatively and positively. Negatively

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16. RE pp.240-242

17. CH p.55

18. CH p.57

19. CH p.58

20. CH p.58

he defines it by denying the validity of form of human life which are not personal."<sup>21</sup> Jesus rejected what Macmurray also rejected, namely the organic relationship, i.e. Jesus made "the discovery that human life is not organic in its essential character".<sup>22</sup> Jesus denied that the organic type of relationship can be the basis of human community. "In other words, he (Jesus) denied that human community can be based upon blood-relationship."<sup>23</sup> The basic discovery of Jesus is that: "a group of human beings who have no blood-relationships to one another can be a human unity if its members make it so".<sup>24</sup> Blood-relationships, i.e. organic relationships, are for Macmurray a matter of fact, while personal relationships are a matter of intention. The basic discovery is that: "human nature cannot be defined in terms of natural fact, but only in terms of intention".<sup>25</sup> The basic intention that forms community is the heterocentric one of intending to help the other and the mutual one of having a common purpose. Macmurray's definition of Jesus as a religious genius is in terms of his discoveries about community.

Macmurray not only presented Jesus as a Prophet in the Hebraic tradition and as a spiritual or religious genius but also as a man with a mission. Macmurray realised that Jesus' mission was one that ultimately had to "end in defeat and death".<sup>26</sup> Jesus' mission was

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21. CH p.62

22. CH p.63

23. CH p.63

24. CH p.64

25. CH p.64

26. SRR p.51



"to conquer fear in the hearts of men and replace it by confidence and trust to relieve us from life on the defensive, and replace it by a life of freedom and spontaneity; to make life rich and full in place of the thin and anxious existence to which our fear condemns us".<sup>27</sup> Macmurray believed that the main theme of Jesus' mission had to do with the difference between faith and fear which is the mortal sickness from which men suffer. "Men need to be saved from their fear, and liberated into faith. The task is to re-establish a universal trustfulness in human relations, in the place of the fear that distorts and destroys life."<sup>28</sup> One must remember that faith for Macmurray is "the natural condition of human consciousness" and something that has "no sense of isolation".<sup>29</sup> Faith for Macmurray is the trust and confidence between persons in communal relationships.<sup>30</sup> Macmurray summarised Jesus' mission as one of teaching men how to live together and to avoid isolation.

Macmurray did not strictly acknowledge that Jesus was God in human form. However, he felt that the hypothesis that Jesus was the incarnation of the Divine personality was closer to satisfying the known conditions than any other hypothesis. "The claim that Jesus of Nazareth is the incarnation of the Divine personality, is in fact, as we have already discovered, a claim that the human personality is universal." Macmurray continued "it implies that all life and all nature can be understood in the light of His personality; that in terms of Him the practical problems of the unification of the world's activity can be completely achieved; indeed that the kind of personality Jesus

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27. Macmurray, John To Save From Fear (London: Friends Home Service Committee, 1964) p.5. hereafter cited as TSFF

28. TSFF p.5

29. CS p.109

30. TSFF p.10

was stands behind the whole unitary process of reality".<sup>31</sup> However, for Macmurray the incarnation of God in a human personality, i.e. the incarnation of God in Christ is a hypothesis and not a dogma.<sup>32</sup> Macmurray's reason for settling for this hypothesis instead of another about the person of Christ is highly revealing. Macmurray maintained that: "Better an anthropomorphic view of reality than a hylomorphic or even a biomorphic one".<sup>33</sup> However, are these the only choices? Cannot there be an element of 'theomorphism' in the equation in the sense of thinking in terms of God's revelation, which was formed by God.

Macmurray surmised that Jesus is the paradigm of the coming maturity of man's religious consciousness. Jesus' mature religious consciousness meant that: "he recognised his mission as the establishment of the Kingdom of God among men, the creation of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. It meant that he became clearly conscious of the methods by which this was possible".<sup>34</sup> The final mission of Jesus was the "preparation of the band of his faithful disciples to stand together",<sup>35</sup> and the setting up of the missionary community. Macmurray's third view of Jesus as in the case of the previous two interpretations, basically focused upon Jesus' communal interpretation of humanity. The task which Jesus ordained for his missionary community was the creation of the universal community. However, Macmurray stressed that this was not just a spiritual community, but an earthly community that was universal. Macmurray, when speaking of Jesus' religious task of "creating a universal communion among men"<sup>36</sup>, concluded that:

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31. ADVEN p.207

32. ADVEN p.215

33. ADVEN p.215

34. RE p.248

35. QM p.30

36. RE p.248

The task was no other-worldly task. It was not the creation of the Kingdom of Heaven in Heaven. There was nothing mystical or particularly 'spiritual' in it. It was the task of creating conscious community among all men everywhere — nothing less; and necessarily included all the conditions, economic, political, and personal, which are involved in this.<sup>37</sup>

Macmurray centred his interpretation around the idea of man's immediate experience on earth. Consequently, Macmurray refused to consider the Kingdom of Heaven as something that has ideal or other-worldly significance. Does such an anthropological interpretation of the idea of the Kingdom of Heaven reflect the total significance of Jesus' concept of the Kingdom of Heaven? Does not such a view limit the message as well as Jesus' understanding of man? Macmurray has limited Jesus' understanding of man by confining him to the assumption that: "Religion is about society".<sup>38</sup> Religion and any true religious statement for Macmurray must be in terms of community and/or society. Therefore, Jesus as an example of mature religious consciousness must necessarily deal mainly with the community. Macmurray stated that: "The purely spiritual which it seeks is the purely imaginary, a ghost world without substance or shadow." Macmurray asserted concretely that: "Jesus came to proclaim, not a way to escape the world, but the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven within it. Christianity is concerned with an earthly world which is eternally perfect."<sup>39</sup> Not only does Macmurray limit the study of religion to community and its associated concepts, but to real community, not ideal community. It is as if Macmurray wished to make the study of religion a matter confined to sociology and anthropology. Ultimately Jesus was not a spiritual or theological genius, but a sociological or anthropological genius for Macmurray.

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37. RE p.249

38. Macmurray, John, A Challenge to the Churches: Religion and Democracy (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1941) p.17 hereafter cited as CC

39. SRR pp.59-60

Macmurray's identification of the Kingdom of Heaven with a worldly universal community is starkly revealed in his early works.

"The Kingdom of Heaven becomes the universal community of mankind based on the sense of unity between man and man, and expressing itself in the sharing of the means of life to meet human needs."<sup>40</sup>

Community for Macmurray rested "upon a basis of common humanity".<sup>41</sup>

This reduces the Good News of the Gospels to the fact that all men have their humanity in common and not upon the fact that our salvation does not depend upon our limited selves and the limits of mankind, but upon the powerful and loving being, God. Macmurray overlooked the spiritual power of Christianity as represented in the Holy Spirit in his efforts to anchor the Christian religion in immediate experience. Christianity is not only like the Hebraic tradition rooted in the material, but it goes beyond the material and immediate experience.

Macmurray deduced that religion is primarily concerned with the communion of persons, consequently he presumed that it is concerned with social development. Macmurray maintained that religion is concerned with social development, since "only by the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven through the process of social development can the conditions for the full and universal expression of personal communion be achieved".<sup>42</sup> Jesus' teachings as interpreted by Macmurray are based upon the experiences of "mutuality, of friendship, or communion between man and man"<sup>43</sup> which lie at the core of any religion for Macmurray. Macmurray's interpretation of Christ's life and works is anthropocentric as opposed to theocentric.

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40. CS p.67

41. CS p.66, CH p.102

42. CS p.98

43. CS p.98

Macmurray postulated that Jesus discovered that human nature can only be understood in "terms of intention".<sup>44</sup> Therefore the basic question that Macmurray asked was "what is the intention of God in history?"<sup>45</sup> Not only what is the intention of God, but what is necessarily "man's real intention --- the intention which expresses his real nature as part of the world" and the intention that: "unifies human action and integrates human nature". Macmurray believed that the intention of God was "a universal community of mankind based on love, freedom and equality...".<sup>46</sup>

Macmurray summarised Jesus' concept of faith in terms of trust between individuals. Macmurray rejected the interdependence of the concepts of mystery and faith. Macmurray maintained that: "a will to believe in mystery" is a manifestation of fear.<sup>47</sup> Macmurray understood not only faith, but God's intention and creation in purely concrete terms in particular in terms of the communal aspects of man. "God acts in history as Creator of Man. The intention of this creation is known --- a universal community of persons, with freedom and equality as its structural principles of relationships."<sup>48</sup>

The central place held by the concept of community in Macmurray's conception of religion and Christianity is sharply illustrated when Macmurray noted that:

Even at the worst, the idea of the unity of persons in relation remains as the core of religion. The language of Christianity bears the same testimony. The various sects and denominations are "communions". The central ritual of Christian worship is the "celebration of Holy Communion". Terms such as "reconciliation"

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44. CH p.65

45. CH p.116

46. CH p.117

47. CH p.100

48. CH p.100

and "atonement", which are central to Christian theology, show the preoccupation of religion with those things which produce and perpetuate strife and enmity with removing the obstacles to friendly and harmonious group-life and the achievement of satisfactory society. The most cursory reading of the New Testament will show how central to Christianity is this preoccupation with social unity and social unification. ... practically, its mission is to seek to realise the family unity of mankind.<sup>49</sup>

Macmurray went to even a further extreme when he maintained that:

"Christianity is inherently a revolutionary religion seeking the achievement of a world community. It is about a new society that has to be brought into being through the transformation of existing societies."<sup>50</sup> Macmurray went even further in his discussion of the Hebrew's rejection of Jesus' teachings when he claimed that: "The Hebrew community to whom Jesus appealed to undertake the task was not prepared to sink its individual identity in a universal fellowship."<sup>51</sup> This hints that a hope and condition of Christianity is one of 'sinking' into universal community. This hints at the extreme danger that is presented by an uncritical use of a collective/communal approach to the individual.

Not only is the core and intention of the Christian religion seen by Macmurray in terms of community and human relations; but he also limited ethics to the same sphere. Macmurray maintained that the ethical teachings of Jesus was a realistic attempt to answer the question: "What conditions must be fulfilled by any actual community if it is extended without limits and so becomes an inclusive fellowship?"<sup>52</sup> Macmurray's understanding of the teachings of Jesus and the ethical conceptions of Jesus as well as the life of Jesus is based upon his assumptions about community and human relations. Consequently does

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49. CC pp.20-21

50. CC p.42

51. CF p.72

52. CF p.69



Macmurray's approach demand an anthropological instead of a theological answer to all questions? Does Macmurray in removing the concept of mystery demand a physical instead of a metaphysical answer to all questions? A study of Macmurray's understanding and use of the notion of community will certainly be revealing. Macmurray's dependence upon the concept of community to explain religion makes an examination of the concept of community vital.



PART III

An Examination and Critique of  
Macmurray's Conception of Community

CHAPTER 8

An Introduction to Macmurray's  
Conception of Community

The understanding of Macmurray's approach to, use of, and interpretation of community is seminal to not only his understanding of human nature and his conception of religion, but to a clear understanding of his total philosophy. This is illustrated by Macmurray's perception of God with its dependence upon his conception of community. Macmurray's understanding of and conception of community as well as its opposite society is central to his total philosophy since within the framework of both of these groups, one finds personal and impersonal relationships which is the central theme in Macmurray's work.

The areas of primary concern that will be investigated will include Macmurray's perception of both community and society, since society sheds light upon community, as well as the interface that exists between these two differing conceptions of society. The first area to be examined will be Macmurray's conception of community, since Macmurray's assumptions about community lie at the very heart of his philosophy.

In Macmurray's discussion about 'the original knowledge of the Other', which is based upon his assumptions about the mother-child relationship, he first pointed out that the first knowledge of a child is the knowledge of the personal Other, i.e. the Other who responds to my cries and cares for me.<sup>1</sup> Macmurray considered this to be the "starting point of all knowledge" for a child and it must be "presupposed at every stage of its subsequent development".<sup>2</sup> Macmurray also concluded that: "My first discrimination of the Other is into a number of different persons all of whom are in communication with me and with one another. The Other acquires the character of a community of which I am a member."<sup>3</sup> The community then starts within the family circle which afterwards becomes

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1. PR p.76

2. PR p.76

3. PR p.77

a model for all communities. This primary discrimination of the Other underlines the realisation that there is a group of persons in relation to one another and in personal relation to a group and also as individuals to each other.<sup>4</sup> This brings to the fore two basic elements that are necessary for the existence of community. The two elements are the need for two or more persons and for these persons to be in personal relation with one another.

Community is a group of two or more persons that are held together by personal relationships. This group is the material from which a fellowship or community arises.<sup>5</sup> Macmurray declared that: "The members of a community are in communion with one another, and their association is a fellowship."<sup>6</sup> This community is made up of members in positive relation to one another which is the basic structural elements within community. "The structure of a community is the nexus or network of the active relations of friendship between all possible pairs of its members."<sup>7</sup>

This fellowship is constituted from, as well as maintained by mutual affection.<sup>8</sup> This means that not only is the community held together and created by mutual affection, i.e. love, but also that the motivation behind the actions within community should be based upon love.<sup>9</sup>

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4. PR p.78

5. Kirkpatrick, Frank Gloyd, "The Idea of God in the Thought of John Macmurray" (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: Brown University, 1970) p.131

6. PR p.146

7. PR p.158

8. PR p.158

9. Largo, Gerald Andrew, "The Concept of Community in the Writings of John Macmurray: A Study of the Implications of John Macmurray's Concept of Community for Roman Catholic Liturgy" (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: New York University, 1971) pp. 275-276

Therefore, the positive motivation that is to be found in community is love. Macmurray defined love as "the motive of actions in which we expend what is ours upon something or someone other than ourselves".<sup>10</sup> Love then has a heterocentric base, which is an important pragmatic element in community. Without the positive motivation of love there could not and would not be any community in terms of Macmurray's comprehension of community. Since mutual affection is the motivation behind community, and that within community each considers the other the centre of value, the value of a person within a group is not placed with himself, but on the other. The heterocentric character of the group does not aim towards fusion of the selves, but the unity of persons.

Community not only presupposes that there is a group that is held together by personal relationships, but it also posits the distinctive heterocentric character of being held together and created by mutual love and affection. Community can be viewed as a harmonious inter-relation of persons<sup>11</sup> which is an end in itself.<sup>12</sup> This is one of the ways in which Macmurray differentiates society from community in that a society should have a common end towards which to strive, whereas a community needs no common goal in order to exist. One might say that within community, in place of the common goal there is the motivation of love. The intention of a community or the purpose of a community is the sharing of a common life.<sup>13</sup>

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10. Macmurray, John, "Freedom in the Person Nexus" in Freedom: Its Meaning ed. by Nanda, Ruth (Anshewm, New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1940) p.186, hereafter cited as FPN

11. Kirkpatrick, op. cit., p.131

12. FPN p.187

13. Jeffko, Walter George, "John Macmurray's Logical Form of the Personal: A Critical Exposition" (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: Fordham University, 1970) p.132

Another characteristic that community presupposes is the unity of persons within the group. Community for Macmurray is a unity of persons as persons.<sup>14</sup> The unifying factor in community is the personal one of mutual affection. Macmurray when discussing the differences between community and society maintained that:

A community, on the other hand, rests upon a different principle of unity. It is not constituted by a common purpose. No doubt its members will share common purposes and co-operate for their realisation. But these common purposes merely express, they do not constitute the unity of the association; for they can be changed freely without any effect upon the unity of the group. Indeed it is characteristic of communities that they create common purposes for the sake of co-operation instead of creating co-operation for the sake of common purposes. It follows from this that a community cannot be brought into existence by organisation. It is not functional. It is not organic. Its principle of unity is personal. It is constituted by the sharing of a common life.<sup>15</sup>

This fellowship is maintained as well as created by mutual affection. This heterocentric grouping is an end in itself since the unity of persons is not for a purpose but something that is brought about within the purpose of sharing a common life.

The community is not self-sustaining, but must be constantly intended and maintained by the persons within it.<sup>16</sup> Ideally the community is inclusive of all persons,<sup>17</sup> but this is only in terms of an ideal, since Macmurray recognised that there were practical limits to a community. Macmurray realised that: "The number of persons who can form a real community is limited by the quality or depth of the community between them."<sup>18</sup> Macmurray realised that with the influx of new persons into the community the quality, i.e. the depth of mutual affection can be threatened. Therefore, the community cannot pragmat-

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14. Ibid

15. CF pp.36-37

16. Kirkpatrick, op. cit., p.120

17. Ibid p.131

18. CS p.135

ically be inclusive of all persons, since the influx of a great many people might threaten the very existence of the community by destroying the personal nature of the group. Macmurray realised that as a community reaches higher levels there is a move towards the inclusion of more people. Macmurray was aware of the existence of these two opposing forces within the community. "It is true both that the smaller size of the group the easier it is to attain a high level of fellowship, and also that the higher levels of fellowship are impossible except through the extension of the numbers of persons who are united."<sup>19</sup> Macmurray at first presupposed that the solution came about with an increase in the economic interdependence of the community.<sup>20</sup> However, this does seem to threaten the personal motivation that is the basis of community. Macmurray suggested that:

"The term which mediates between the extremes of this seeming paradox is an economic term. The degree of community depends for its reality upon the intensity of economic interdependence, and that depends mainly, though, not altogether, upon the numbers co-operating in functional interdependence for purposes of economic production."<sup>21</sup>

This solution to the paradox presented by the conflict between the constant need for an all inclusive community and the need for a limited community containing a high level of fellowship seems to undermine Macmurray's basic approach to community which demanded that community should have no purpose beyond that of sharing the common life. The introduction of an essential economic factor into the community means that other purposes besides mutual affection motivate the community.

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19. CS p.136

20. CS p.136

21. CS pp.136-137



The solution to the problem of conflicting needs lies outside the economic interdependence of the community. The conflicting needs may be seen as necessary since one always needs to have a constant influx of new persons into the community since there is a constant loss through death etc. However, the two potential needs of the community do form a constant source of weakness.

However, Macmurray proposed another solution to the conflict set up by the constant need for the inclusion of people and the need for a small intimate community in order to maintain a highly personal level of relations within the community. Macmurray proposed that:

In a group the full realisation of the potentiality of fellowship is limited, and the larger the group the severer must be the limitation. This does not mean that in the larger communities fellowship is less real, or that it differs in its essential character. In the larger fellowship the full intention remains latent and potential, as it were, and is fully expressed only in the direct relations of its members, each to each.<sup>22</sup>

However, this solution seems to imply that the only true community is the 'I-Thou' of two persons with the problems of egoisme a deux.

However, the larger fellowship only has, as Macmurray declared, a latent and potential character, since it rarely acts completely as a community, since such harmonious action between a great many people is difficult. Nevertheless, large communities are either only a matter of potential, which means they do not entirely exist in reality or that larger communities are more imperfect since they exist partially as a matter of potential unlike small communities.

There are two other structural factors in Macmurray's description of community. Macmurray pointed out that: "a personal relation is a relation between equals, and it exists for the realisation and expression of freedom".<sup>23</sup> Since the community is made up of personal relations, one

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22. CF p.50

23. CH p.65



can therefore assume that equality and freedom are necessary to community. Macmurray averred that: "equality and freedom are constitutive of community ...",<sup>24</sup> which means that along with the other factors such as mutual affection a community must uphold in practice the precepts of equality and freedom.

What are the limiting factors to human community according to Macmurray? In terms of the family it takes more than just the animal blood tie to make up a community. The limiting factor is what the human beings within the community make of it; consequently the family is only a community when the persons within the family intend it to be a community.<sup>25</sup> The actual blood relationships within a family are consequently secondary to the community aspect of the family. Consequently, the family does not impose a limit upon community. "The intention to enter into community with others beyond the limits of the 'natural community' is the basis for the enlargement of human community."<sup>26</sup> The basis of a community is then the intention to enter into community.

#### Community as More Than Family

The most basic unit of the community is the family and in particular the mother-child relationship. Macmurray used the family as a reoccurring example of the community. Consequently, a closer examination of what Macmurray understood to be the family and how these affected his understanding of community is necessary.

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24. CH p.67

25. RE p.111

26. PR p.158

Macmurray's presentation of the concept of community begins in Persons in Relation with his examination of the mother-child relationship. For Macmurray the term 'mother' does not have an organic but a general personal denotation. "It refers to the adult person who cares for the baby."<sup>27</sup> From this caring comes the primary perception of the Other. The 'mother' will be the primary or central figure for the child and other persons in the beginning will be subsidiary to the 'mother'. In what Macmurray termed the 'original community' the 'mother' is the personal centre.

Also in reference to the family there is another basic relationship that needs to be mentioned, that of marriage. Although Macmurray did not specifically state that marriage is necessary to the family he gave it communal characteristics that are also necessary for the family. For Macmurray marriage is a personal relationship depending upon equality and freedom. An ideal marriage is motivated by mutual affection as well as friendship. Although Macmurray did not specifically refer to marriage as one of the necessary factors in a family, he certainly gave marriage the same characteristics as community.<sup>28</sup> The mother-child relationship as well as the relation between man and woman made up the two central relationships which make up the family, which is the paradigm of the family. It should be noted that both are 'I-Thou' relationships.

"The family is the original human community and the basis as well as the origin of all subsequent communities. It is, therefore, the norm of all community, so that any community, is a brotherhood."<sup>29</sup> "The

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27. PR p.75

28. RE pp.108-105

29. PR p.155

primitive human community is the family --- the kinship group. It is the original unit of co-operation."<sup>30</sup> Macmurray used the family as a model for community. In fact the family provided a model for the perfect community since an ideal family is created by mutual affection and maintained by mutual affection, which is the constant underlying positive motivation. Macmurray in his discussion of the family as community stated that: "They care for one another sufficiently to have no need to fear one another. The normal positive motivation is usually sufficient to dominate the negative motives of self-interest and individualism."<sup>31</sup> The ideal family as community is completely positive in motivation and lacks the negative motivation of fear, while fear is the primary form of motivation in society. The more a society approximates the family the closer it comes to being a community.<sup>32</sup>

It must be noted that we have been referring to an ideal family. There are certain economic and social functions that are carried on within the family structure that make many families less than true communities.<sup>33</sup> For example, if a family is kept together for purely financial reasons then the family can no longer be considered a genuine community since the negative motivation of fear is dominant, which means that there is a motivation other than that of sharing a common life.

In Macmurray's analysis of the family as community, positive motivation, i.e. love, plays a prominent part. This positive motivation

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30. CF p.62

31. PR p.156

32. Largo. op. cit., pp.242-243

33. Jeffko, op. cit., p.133

like that of friendship, which is a type of love, is termed mutual affection by Macmurray. All communities are positively motivated, consequently, an examination of mutual affection is of direct interest in Macmurray's analysis of and use of the concept of community.

Macmurray considered a general intention to be a unifying action within a group. The intention within the group "maintains the personal unity of any group of agents; ..." <sup>34</sup> The intention of every human being is to enter into fellowship, since we can only be ourselves in fellowship. <sup>35</sup> The intention behind the group, therefore, must be fellowship which can only be motivated by mutual affection. This intention towards fellowship, makes up the unifying factor in the group. Not only does this unify the group it also makes it something more than a group of agents. Community is only fully realised as a matter of intention. <sup>36</sup> "The inter-relation of agents is a necessary matter of fact. But it is also a necessary matter of intention." For it is not enough to be a part of the group of persons, "he must know that he is a member of the group ..." <sup>37</sup> However, in order for a community to exist and to constitute something beyond a group, there has to be a heterocentric motivation, i.e. an intention brought about by mutual affection with the other put before the self.

The positive intent or motivation of a community is based upon love in the form of friendship. "A community is for the sake of friendship and presupposes love." <sup>38</sup> In community the members are in communion

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34. PR p.119

35. CH p.61

36. Mooney, Philip, "The Notion of Religion in John Macmurray"  
(Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: Fordham University, 1972)  
p.209

37. PR pp.119-120

38. PR p.151

to such a degree that the group constitutes a fellowship.<sup>39</sup> The seminal importance of love in a community, for Macmurray, is evinced in his analysis of Jesus' statement 'love your enemies'. Macmurray believed that: "The statement 'love your enemies' presupposes the true community does not exist and is a precept defining at once the character of the personal community and the direction of activity which intends to bring it into existence."<sup>40</sup> Love as the precursor to community has an all inclusive character. It is prepared to act as if everyone is a possible member of the community both friend and enemy. Macmurray believed that love is the "first condition of any practical effort to create community where it does not yet exist".<sup>41</sup> Love is the starting point for community and is the basic constitutive element in the setting up of community. Love and friendship are the beginnings of any effort to establish a personal community. A community must be started with "the intention to establish mutual affection where it does not yet exist".<sup>42</sup>

As has already been noted Macmurray deduced that love is primarily a motive for actions which are heterocentric in character.<sup>43</sup> Love is also necessary for the acquisition of knowledge about other persons. "My knowledge of another person is a function of my love for him; and in proportion as my knowledge is a function of my fear for him, it is illusory or unreal."<sup>44</sup> Knowledge of another persons comes through the revelation which comes from the trust that is inspired by love. Fear destroys the trust that is needed for mutual revelation, whereas, love creates the trust that is needed for mutual revelation. The implica-

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39. Largo, op. cit., p.243

40. CH p.67

41. CH p.67

42. CH p.68

43. FPM p.186

44. PR p.170

tions of the heterocentric character of love is far reaching and is seminal to Macmurray's approach to faith, courage, confidence and trust.<sup>45</sup>

The love that is necessary to bring about community is found within the family, which is the originator of mutual affection.<sup>46</sup> However, Macmurray pointed out that the existence of love does not necessarily mean that a family is a community, but it is a beginning.<sup>47</sup> Love is the beginning for community, but it is not the only element that is necessary for the existence of a community. A group based upon love as opposed to fear has within it certain basic elements which can go on to become a community. Love is the basis of community and the heterocentric element distinguishes the persons within the community who exist for others, from society which is based upon the existence of the self and not the other. Macmurray succinctly stated that: "Love is for the other; fear is for the self".<sup>48</sup> Love is "the positive ground motive of personal activity", which is defined as "the capacity for self-transcendence, or the capacity to care for the other".<sup>49</sup> Love is tautologically defined as the "positive motive which sustains every form of human fellowship".<sup>50</sup>

Love sustains human fellowship which is an essential element in human community. Macmurray labelled the association of persons within a community as a fellowship. He stated that: "The members of a community are in communion with one another, and their association is a fellowship."<sup>51</sup>

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45. Mooney, op. cit., pp.222-224

46. Macmanus, Ora Roland, "The Concept of The Personal in the Writings of John Macmurray" (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: The Catholic University of America, 1967) p.166

47. RE p.255

48. CF p.57

49. CF p.57

50. CF p.57

51. PR p.146



Macmurray pointed out that: "since such an association exhibits the form of the personal in its fully positive personal character, it will necessarily contain within it and be constituted by its own negative, which is society".<sup>52</sup> A fellowship also contains within it certain facets that are also contained within a society. Part of Macmurray's description of community is based upon its opposition with society. There are two types of association within a fellowship. The two types of association that are within fellowship are labelled as 'friendship' and 'co-operation'. In society there exists only the association that is based upon co-operation. Macmurray maintained that friendship and co-operation are "partly independent of one another", but he also asseverated that: "friendship though it cannot be constituted by co-operation for a common purpose, necessarily generates such co-operation".<sup>53</sup> This does not just mean that there is co-operation motivated by love within fellowship. Macmurray posited a distinctive difference between the combination of the two types of association as opposed to co-operation by itself. The combination of friendship and co-operation is beneficial. The association of friendship is not constituted by a single purpose, therefore, "it permits of a change in purpose".<sup>54</sup> There is also the advantage that "the common ends which are worked for and the co-operation for their achievement are together means to maintaining and deepening the friendship".<sup>55</sup> The two types of association found within fellowship as opposed to the singular co-operation of society means that there is not only the added flexibility of easily changed purpose within the context of co-operation, but also the deepening of the binding element, i.e. friendship.

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52. PR p.146

53. FPM p.188

54. FPM p.188 Author's italics

55. FPM p.188



Community, i.e. fellowship, demands direct personal relations, since without this type of relation there can be no friendship. "But community can only be actual in direct personal relations, since we can only be actually in fellowship with those whom we know personally."<sup>56</sup> Any unity within fellowship is personal. Macmurray maintain that: "A unity of fellowship is personal. It is a unity of persons as persons; and each member of a fellowship enters it with the whole of himself, and not in respect of a particular interest which he happens to share with others."<sup>57</sup> Society on the other hand unifies individuals because of particular interests and skills.

Macmurray made a rather far reaching assumption when he maintained that human beings only find self-realisation within community, and that "we can only be ourselves in fellowship, as a mutual caring for one another, it follows that the intention to enter into fellowship is implicit in every human being and in every human activity".<sup>58</sup> However, Macmurray did not take into account the fact that even though most human beings find themselves in fellowship, that others are acting in reaction to fellowship and do not wish to be in fellowship. Some people only reveal their true feelings away from all other persons and groupings.

Besides the combination of the associations of co-operation and friendship within fellowship there is the existence of direct personal relations which implies that there are certain intrinsic components operating within fellowship. Since personal relations are a part of fellowship, one would expect to find mutual reciprocity within fellowship. Macmurray has stated that: "the essential condition for realising

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56. PR p.189

57. CF p.49

58. CF p.61

fellowship is a mutual reciprocity".<sup>59</sup> This signifies the realisation on both sides of the existence of the recognition of the other and the subsequent recognition of the need for a mutual approach to the common life. At the same time there is the realisation that even though the persons are bound together by mutual reciprocity within the context of the fellowship, there is also the need for the individual to be themselves.

Another factor that is connected with fellowship that is necessary for the on-going existence of fellowship is the "complete realisation of the self through a complete self-transcendence".<sup>60</sup> One needs not only the complete affirmation of one's self, but also the mutual affirmation of the other and the reciprocity that exists between two persons in relation. Macmurray maintained that: "The ground of fellowship is common humanity".<sup>61</sup> The common intention of two people that meet together is to enter into fellowship which assumes that the path of least resistance is fellowship. Macmurray asserted that: "the natural tendency of any two human beings who meet one another is to enter into fellowship, irrespective of all differences whether of age, sex, race, nationality, social condition, natural ability or any other simply as human beings".<sup>62</sup> Macmurray assumed that the only thing necessary for fellowship is common humanity. One must question this assumption since in order to realise fellowship some form of communication is necessary. It is significant that Macmurray failed to grapple with the dividing aspects of language.

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59. CF p.60

60. CF p.59

61. CF p.61

62. CF p.61

### Freedom and Equality

In personal relations there is the need not only for personal reciprocity and self-realisation within the personal relationship, but also the need for freedom and equality. Community necessarily presupposes freedom and equality as constitutive elements. The existence of community, i.e. fellowship, posits the existence of freedom and equality, since equality and freedom are necessary for the creation and continuing existence of community and continually necessary elements within the relations that compose community. These two precepts are essential to the structure of community as has already been noted. Therefore, Macmurray's discussion and ideas about the precepts of freedom and equality will shed light upon his understanding of community.

When Macmurray assumed the presence of equality in a direct personal relationship, he is not thinking of equality as a matter of fact, but as a matter of intention. Persons in order to achieve unity must relate as equals. "This does not mean that they have, as matter of fact, equal abilities, equal rights, equal functions or any other kind of de facto equality. The equality is intentional: it is an aspect of the mutuality of the relation."<sup>63</sup> If there was no equality between persons then there would only be negative motivation whereby one person would be constantly using another as a means to his personal ends. Macmurray rejected the idea of equality of persons in a mathematical or material sense and for that matter he rejected the concept of an ideal equality. It does not contain the recognition of differences between individuals; "it is precisely the recognition of difference and variety amongst individuals that gives meaning to the assertion of equality. The statement that all men are equal means that any claim

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63. PR p.158

that one man or one class or type of man is superior or inferior to another is, as a matter of fact, quite untrue."<sup>64</sup> Without the assumption of equality human relationships are impossible, i.e. one becomes subordinate to the other, thereby making society the only possible form of grouping. Equality is, therefore, a necessary constituent of community since it is necessary for the maintenance of the 'I-Thou' relationship. Macmurray understood friendship to be "essentially a relation between equals".<sup>65</sup> Personal equality overrides but does not remove differences between persons. Personal equality means that: "any two human beings whatever their individual differences, can recognise and treat one another as equals, and so be friends".<sup>66</sup> It is necessary for equality to be present in order for friendship<sup>67</sup> or any other type of 'I-Thou' relation based on mutual affection to exist. Macmurray did not try to remove the problem of the differences between individuals, but recognised that the differences were involved in strengthening human relations. Equality is necessary for a personal relationship, but once this relationship is established "the differences between the persons concerned are the stuff out of which the texture of their fellowship is woven".<sup>68</sup> The differences enrich the relationship since there is an increase in those things that may be shared between the two persons. However, the greater the difference, the greater the difficulty in establishing the relationship between two persons. "The greater the fundamental differences between two persons are, the more difficult it is to establish a fully personal relation between them, but, also the more worthwhile

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64. CH pp.74-75

65. CF p.51

66. CF p.51

67. CH p.80

68. RE pp.104-105

the relation will be if it can be established and maintained."<sup>69</sup>

A factor that Macmurray failed to mention is that if a community is totally alike the chances on the practical level for survival is lessened since all would want to do the same things and would have only the skills for the same type of thing, whereas if there is a large amount of difference within the community the individuals will have many different talents to apply to each situation and problem that arises within the group, thereby strengthening the community as well as the interdependence between the individuals within the community.

With the creation of mutual affection the principle of personal equality is raised to the level of intention.<sup>70</sup> Equality is a matter of intention within community. Therefore, true mutual communion implies equality.<sup>71</sup> To destroy the quality between individuals would mean the destruction of the heterocentric character of the relation, since one would be trying to make use of the other, thereby removing the communion between individuals.

The destruction of equality causes the possibility of the subordination of one individual to another to arise which makes injustice possible.<sup>72</sup> Equality is the centre of justice, which suggests that justice is easier to maintain in a truly personal community. Macmurray's description of community appears to have an intrinsic moral or ethical element within the structure. Not only does the necessity of the intention of equality presuppose certain ethical norms, but the element of freedom also presupposes that the community has an ethical norm built

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69. RE p.105

70. CH p.69

71. RE p.227

72. PR pp.189-190

into the structure. Denial of freedom or equality not only denies community but can also be interpreted as an immoral or unethical act.

There is a close connection between the need for freedom and the need for equality in the community. This close connection is illustrated by the assumption by Macmurray that the principle of love in community expresses itself in the principle of equality, but also in the principle of freedom.<sup>73</sup> Macmurray defined the capacity for communion in terms of both freedom and equality. "That capacity for communion, that capacity for entering into free and equal personal relations ..."<sup>74</sup> Freedom and equality are strictly correlative and reciprocal; there is no freedom without equality and there is no equality without freedom.<sup>75</sup> There is a need for an investigation into Macmurray's use of the concept of freedom and how he applied this concept of freedom to community.

There are a number of types of freedom within Macmurray's overall conception of freedom that are to be found throughout his work. However, Macmurray formulated a fairly broad definition of freedom, which revolves around the negative definition of absence of restraint or around the more positive definition of acting spontaneously. "Freedom means absence of restraint, and the presence of restraint comes with the recognition that one is prevented from doing what one intends."<sup>76</sup> The more positive approach is represented by Macmurray's statement that: "Freedom means freedom, not something else; and to live freely means to live not by rules but spontaneously."<sup>77</sup>

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73. CH p.71

74. RE p.63

75. Jeffko, op. cit., p.138

76. CH p.72

77. RE p.111



However, the problem of Macmurray's definition does not end with such a simple definition, since Macmurray identified and defined several types of freedom. Macmurray identified and defined absolute freedom as "simply our capacity to act -- not to behave or to react, but to form an intention and seek to realise it".<sup>78</sup> Another simple definition is offered which "is the ability to carry out our chosen purposes; to do what we please".<sup>79</sup> However, Macmurray realised that freedom is relative, which meant that Macmurray was fully aware that absolute freedom lies beyond our present achievements. The concept of relative freedom as the second type of freedom introduces the practical recognition that freedom is always opposed by such things as the desire in man for security. It is the combination of conscience and impulse.<sup>80</sup> The third type of freedom that is to be found in Macmurray's work is that of personal freedom. "Personal freedom includes with it an economic freedom, which is concerned with our relation to the material world, a social freedom, which is concerned with the organic inter-relation of people in the life of society, and also the spiritual freedom of thought and emotion, which is its peculiar characteristic."<sup>81</sup> Macmurray presented three different views or types of freedom that come under the headings relative, absolute and personal or moral.<sup>82</sup> The main type of freedom that concerns community is that of personal or moral freedom.

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78. CF p.2

79. CF p.5

80. CF p.3

81. FMW o.101

82. Jeffko, op. cit., p.137



The freedom of anything is its ability to express its own nature to the full without constraint, human freedom is the ability to express this peculiar property which belongs only to human beings -- the ability to live spontaneously (that is, from themselves) in terms of the other (that is, for and in and by what is not themselves). Only when we live in this way can we be free; for only then do we express our nature in action.<sup>83</sup>

The positive and negative definitions that were offered for freedom, i.e. absence from restraint and spontaneity, contain Macmurray's two basic ways of viewing personal freedom. The explanation of freedom as the lack of restraint is certainly the ideal definition, but it is too absolute. Macmurray's definition of freedom as spontaneous action in terms of others is the one that is immediately applicable to the community.

When personal freedom is seen in terms of heterocentric spontaneous action then one has a relative, communal and personal definition of freedom. However, Macmurray certainly did not seem to settle for any firm definition of freedom but tended to use several. Nevertheless, the type of freedom that is of interest is the type which can be found operating within the community which is moral<sup>84</sup> or personal freedom.

There is no doubt, whatsoever, that Macmurray considered freedom to be an essential constituent of community. Macmurray declared that within a community, persons could "realise their freedom as agents, since in the absence of the fear of the self there is no constraint on either, and each can be himself fully; neither is under obligation to act a part".<sup>85</sup> Freedom in the community situation is the ability to be oneself which is to act spontaneously which presupposes the absence of fear. The lack of fear within a community is necessary since it means that there is a chance for the existence of freedom.

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83. FMW p.184

84. Jeffko, op. cit., p.138

85. PR p.158

Fear destroys freedom. Macmurray asserted that: "It is obviously untrue to say that we are free to do as we please, if we do not know what we want to do, and all of us often find it very difficult to know what we want to do. Again, even if we know what we want to do, we may be afraid to do it, and our fear may be a constraint within us."<sup>86</sup> This fear is a deep and primitive fear of the unknown and this unknown can include other people since they can never be completely known.<sup>87</sup> If this fear comes about then the relationship may be destroyed and the love which makes up the community is overcome by the fear that has destroyed freedom and in its turn the community is destroyed. Freedom is also destroyed by the creation of personal opposition between persons. Macmurray asserted that: "personal opposition destroys freedom, because it means that a man's actions are dictated by his enemy. To be on the defensive is to be incapable of freedom of action".<sup>88</sup> Another destructive factor that will suppress freedom is the inability to maintain equality. Macmurray termed this the will to power which has its origins in the inequality which overwhelms freedom.<sup>89</sup>

The loss or destruction or even the failure to reach a condition of freedom within the community brings about the loss of the condition within the group that calls community into existence.

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86. FMW pp.172-173

87. CF p.12

88. RAS p.54

89. FPN p.193

The primary condition which must be fulfilled if we are not to be frustrated, is that the relations which bind us together into community, and which form the basis of the possibility of human co-operation, should be right. Thus the root of frustration and unfreedom in human life is the existence of enmity and estrangement between us. If the relations between individuals in any community are not harmonious, then its members must be frustrated.<sup>90</sup>

Enmity and estrangement for Macmurray come from the introduction of fear and/or inequality which destroys freedom and in so doing dismantles the community. "The crux of the problem of freedom is the overcoming of estrangement and hostility in the relations of persons, always provided that we do not interpret this in a dualist way to mean merely getting rid of certain feelings."<sup>91</sup>

Macmurray wished to remove the motives behind the behaviour which is referred to by the terms 'hostility', 'enmity' and 'estrangement'. Freedom is a matter of motive or intention in human actions. Freedom is the creative force of mutual affection raised to the level of intention.<sup>92</sup>

The field of freedom is to be found in the personal life. For Macmurray this goes far beyond the fact that people ought to be free in their personal life, it means that "without freedom there can be no personal life. The personal life is ....., just that life in which we are seeking freedom in our relations with one another".<sup>93</sup> A result of trying to achieve personal communal relations is freedom. The freedom of each individual is dependent upon that of others. "Human freedom can be realised only as the freedom of individuals in relation; and the freedom of each of us is relative to that of the others."<sup>94</sup> Freedom is

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90. CH p.72

91. CH p.72

92. CH p.69

93. RE p.105

94. CF pp.8-9

a product of "right personal relations".<sup>95</sup> One of the factors of the right personal relationship is that of equality which again illustrates the interdependence of freedom and equality. An assumption that underlies Macmurray's statement that: "Real freedom is always proportionate in a society to the equality between its members."<sup>96</sup> Freedom is dependent upon our relation with others and is consequently a product of a true community and is necessary in order to have the community function. Freedom is part of the definition of community in Macmurray's analysis.

The two major constitutive elements of friendship, and therefore of community, are equality and freedom. In order for there to be friendship there must be a relation between equals not in the functional sense of equality, but in the personal sense of equality. Personal equality is that which overrides but does not ignore the differences between human beings.<sup>97</sup> The second constitutive element of friendship is freedom. There is no imposed unity upon the persons. It is dependent upon the free activity of all persons concerned. It brings about the complete freedom of self-expression and self-revelation which is not only mutual but unconstrained.<sup>98</sup> Freedom is more negative than positive since it denotes the lack of something whereas equality has a more positive inclination.

The main underpinnings of fellowship are mutual affection, equality and freedom. The act of fellowship in turn gives rise to the community as a whole. What makes the difference between the act of fellowship and a community is that the individuals within it act together and are united by a common life. However, community is distinct from society,

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95. FPN p.193

96. CS p.158

97. CF p.51

98. CF pp.51-52

since within community the individuals act together and join in the activities of fellowship. The individuals within the community are not only sharing a common life but are conscious of the common life. "In any actual community of persons, then, there is not merely a common life, but also a consciousness of the common life, and it is this consciousness which constitutes the association, a personal association or community."<sup>99</sup>

Macmurray realised that there is also a tension between those individuals in a group that see themselves as individuals only and those that see themselves as part of a group. It is the life of the individual which makes up the common life, but Macmurray deduced that we can only be human in terms of community. All members of the group need to be conscious of the group. "What constitutes the humanity of the human group is the consciousness of each member that he belongs to it; and the intention, which prevades all his activities to realise his membership, even if it must be, at times, in anger and revolt."<sup>100</sup> The tension felt by some individuals, which is only a sign of the seminal character of the community, when the self becomes the centre of its own consciousness is of importance. This egocentric consciousness aims at individual self-realisation, which is an impossibility according to Macmurray's hypothesis about human nature. Macmurray maintained that:

Now individual self-realisation is an impossibility. Selfhood is inherently mutual, and it is only in relationship with others that the self has any reality or can express it. Individualism, in which the individual self becomes its own end, is incompatible with the nature of action, in which the end must lie outside the self. The impulse of self-realisation is an impulse to spontaneous action. But the concentration upon the self negates the basis of action.<sup>101</sup>

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99. PR p.161

100. CF p.9

101. CH p.172

has already been encountered in Macmurray's discussion of the connection between community and religion.

One of the continuing themes within Macmurray's work is his search for the human experiences and/or activities that will provide the empirical basis for religion.<sup>104</sup> Macmurray proposed four basic general facts that must be accounted for by any religious theory. The first is the universality of religion in human society. The second is that there are analogous forms of religion in animal life. The third is that religion has been the matrix from which all "the various aspects of culture and civilisation have crystallised".<sup>105</sup> The last general fact that must be accounted for is that "religion is, in intention, inclusive of all members of the society to which it refers, and depends on their active co-operation to constitute it".<sup>106</sup> Macmurray considered these characteristics to be best accounted for and understood when one considered religion in terms of personal relations, in particular those personal relations within a community of persons.<sup>107</sup>

Macmurray's perception of religion is certainly intimately connected with and dependent upon his assumptions about community. Macmurray considered religion to be "the reflective activity which expresses the consciousness of the community; or more tersely, religion is the celebration of communion".<sup>108</sup> Religion is the celebration of the consciousness of community as well as the symbol of the mutual consciousness of community. Macmurray presented this theme in several ways and

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104. PR p.151

105. PR p.156

106. PR p.156

107. PR p.157

108. PR p.162



throughout his works. In one of his earlier works he stated that:  
"The consciousness of forming a group-unit, or being a human society, which is inherent in every real society, is itself religious, whether this is recognised or not."<sup>109</sup> Macmurray stressed the importance of religion bringing into being the self-consciousness of the community through its members, and the necessity of this self-consciousness for the existence of the community and the individuals within the community.

Macmurray wrote in a later work that:

The core of religion, from its very origin, is the 'celebration of community' — the expression and glorification of the consciousness of fellowship. Since all the aspects and all the activities of the common life meet in this consciousness of fellowship — for they are its content — religion is all-inclusive. Its objective correlation is the whole content of human experience and human activity. In its central function, it brings to conscious (sic) the implicit human intention of unity in fellowship — with its principles of equality and freedom. It maintains the intention of consciousness, deepens and strengthens it, and directs it towards its day-to-day realisation in the co-operative activities of the group. As an expression of conscious reflection, it enlarges the field of fellowship in time; linking the living with their dead and with the generation of unborn.<sup>110</sup>

This gives the group a meaning beyond that of the present individual members that constitute the group.

Religion for Macmurray is about community. Macmurray has simply but pointedly stated that: "religion is about community".<sup>111</sup> He has also just as dogmatically stated the converse that: "Every human community is religious".<sup>112</sup> Macmurray constantly returned to the closely interwoven components of community and religion. Moreover, the religious expression of community consciousness in primitive community was of direct interest to any study of religion.

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109. CS p.134

110. CF pp.62-63

111. SRR p.32

112. CS p.134



Macmurray first examined in detail the different aspects of rituals and ceremonies that are to be found in primitive religions. "Ritual activities have to be carried out according to a traditional pattern which prescribes every detail."<sup>113</sup> This in turn not only strengthens a sense of belonging by doing things together, but also connects the tribe with the dead and unborn. "So the tribe is felt as a unity of which its present members are merely the transient representatives."<sup>114</sup> The rituals and ceremonies of the tribe "integrate: "the individual participants with one another and with their unity. They are made conscious that they belong to the great family, and that they must maintain its way of life and transmit it unbroken to the future".<sup>115</sup> The common life, that religion brings to consciousness, expressed and confirms the co-operation which constitutes the daily life of the tribe. "It is both natural and inevitable that religious rituals should be specialised for reference to one or other of those forms of co-operation."<sup>116</sup> An example being the gathering of food or the raising of children, which are seen in primitive fertility dances and such rituals that are concerned with the changes of the seasons; the modern day practice of marriage can be classified as an example of the specialised rituals which bring to the conscious level the co-operation within the community that such activities demand. Macmurray contended that: "Primitive religion is tribal, and its ceremonial is an expression of the tribe as the unity of its members."<sup>117</sup> A primitive tribe is a group of people who as a matter of fact live a common life. However, not only is any group made up of

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113. SRR p.31

114. SRR p.31

115. SRR p.32

116. SRR p.32

117. CS p.32

members as a matter of fact, but each member intends and should be conscious of being a part of the unity. Macmurray concluded that:

The reflective aspect of this is that he not merely is a member but knows that he is a member. In virtue of this knowledge he can act in association with the others either willingly or against his will; he can be either for the community or against it. The unity of any community of persons is constituted and maintained by the will to community in its members.<sup>118</sup>

It is the religion of the tribe which centres around the corporate acts of the members of the tribe and celebrates the fellowship of the tribe. "The effect of this ceremonial is to bring to consciousness in all participants their union with one another, and to associate this with rejoicing."<sup>119</sup>

There are two themes in Macmurray's analysis of the interdependence of religion and community. The first centres around and upon the awareness of the community which brought about the rituals of religion. The second theme is that religion symbolises the community for the members of the group. "To celebrate anything is to do something which expresses symbolically our consciousness of it and our joy in being conscious of it."<sup>120</sup> Primitive religion is concerned with intentionality, "it has to symbolise its objectives; consequently its primary expressions are ritual activities in which all members of the community share".<sup>121</sup> These religious rituals have a meaning beyond themselves, i.e. beyond the present immediacy of common experience, they represent what is hoped for and what is feared. Religion has the subjective function of making people aware of the enjoyment of fellowship, i.e. consciousness of community and at the same time the objective side which is a "technique for the achievement of common intentions through representations".<sup>122</sup>

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118. PR p.160

119. RAS p.60

120. PR p.162

121. CF p.63

122. CF pp.63-64

Each individual that participates in the ceremonial celebrates his connection with the common life. He has by participating recognised himself as a member of the community, dependent upon the community. Macmurray believed that: "all members of the community are united in the same symbolic action; and this act is an expression and realisation of personal relationship".<sup>123</sup> However, only the worship of God, i.e. the Other, the Creator, and the Father which is only to be found in mature religion can fully express and represent the personal relationship that are to be found in community.<sup>124</sup> Consequently, the religious celebration that carries the most meaning is that which symbolises the Other, i.e. the representation of the mutual reciprocity of personal relationships, is the worship of God. The worship of God in Macmurray's opinion is the ultimate symbol as well as the ultimate recognition of community. The worship of God agrees with Macmurray's definition of the celebration of communion. Macmurray defined the celebration of communion as a something that involved "communal reflection in which all members of the community share. It must find its expression in a common activity which has a symbolic character, with a reference beyond itself; an activity undertaken not for its own sake, but for the sake of what it means or signifies".<sup>125</sup>

There are two aspects of this celebration which includes the celebration of the common life and secondly the dependence on the natural world.<sup>126</sup> Although Macmurray recognised that primitive religion celebrated the co-operation between nature and man, which he interpreted to be actually between nature and the community,<sup>127</sup> he emphasised the co-operation of man with man. Mature religions considered the relation

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123. RAS p.59

124. RAS pp.58-59

125. PR p.162

126. RAS p.58

127. SRR p.33

of man with man and man to God as one unit. Mature religion does not tend to separate these two relations within religion into two separate categories. However, as Macmurray's definition of religion illustrates, the man with man relation seems to dominate his thinking about religion, as illustrated by the following statement:

The religious issue in human life is the relation of man to man in the common life, an issue which is summarised and made universal as the relation of men to God the personal absolute. The task of religion is to produce and to sustain in us that structure of emotional motive, and therefore that system of habitual action in the daily round of the common life, that alone can make social life possible and can keep it unified and harmonious. Only religion can create and maintain the community of the personal life of mankind; for religion alone speaks direct to the emotions of the common man in the common life.<sup>128</sup>

There is little doubt that the concept of community played a dominant role in Macmurray's thinking about religion. Macmurray visualised universal religion in terms of universal brotherhood and the drive towards a single universal community.<sup>129</sup> Macmurray wrote that: "The religious demand is a demand for universal communion in a universal community. Mature religion would be the satisfaction of this demand through the creation of communion, and of community as the condition of communion."<sup>130</sup> Macmurray in fact assumed that communion with God not only is totally inseparable from communion with man, but also hinted that the communion between men is a pre-requisite for communion with God or at least an example of man's greater communion with the Creator. Macmurray averred that: "there could be no distinction between religion as communion with God, and the social community of man. There can be no whole without its parts; and a communion with God which is not a communion with man, is no communion at all, but is refusal".<sup>131</sup>

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128. Macmurray, John, Through Chaos to Community, (London: National Peace Council, 1944) p.13

129. SRR pp.37-38

130. RE p.248

131. RE p.250

In demanding that community be the defining characteristic in understanding religion and the religious impulse, one encounters a paradox. Macmurray was aware that this anomaly existed:

It is important also to recognise that this demand for communion which is the religious impulse in man is necessarily absolute. It is without limits. It comes into operation wherever there is the absence of complete community. It cannot be satisfied within limits. It must realise itself universally or remain unrealised and unsatisfied. This dictates its goal, which can be nothing short of the complete integration of all human beings in community and of humanity with the world in which it lives. But in the time process towards this unrecognised goal there are contradictions which arise. The pressure towards complete communion has many aspects. We may find that completeness in one direction makes for incompleteness in another. If communion extends to a large number of persons its inner completeness — its intensity — may tend to be lost.<sup>132</sup>

However, by introducing limits one makes it impossible to reach the universal community. The utilisation of community as the primary mode of apperception for investigating religion may have forced Macmurray into an unnecessary paradox, since ideal community does contain the seeds of an antinomy, i.e. its inclusive nature is at odds with the exclusive nature of its basic component the 'I-Thou' relation.

Nevertheless, Macmurray's conception of the task of religion as involved with the strengthening of personal community is a useful and enlightening one. Macmurray recognised that the celebration of community is a means of strengthening the will of the community. Macmurray opined that: "The function of religion is, then to mobilise and strengthen the positive elements in the motivation of its members, to overcome the negative motives where they exist, to prevent the outbreak of enmity and strife, to dominate the fear of the Other and subordinate the centrifugal to the centripetal tendencies in the community."<sup>133</sup> Macmurray perceived the task of mature religion to be the creation of personal

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132. RE pp.238-239

133. PR p.163

community, not an ideal or spiritual community but a concrete and material type of community of this world.<sup>134</sup>

The understanding of community for Macmurray is inseparable from his conception of religion and the task of religion, since the creation of community is a part of the religious task. Community is not only a set of definable characteristics which lifts a group to a level higher than society; it is also fundamental to Macmurray's understanding of the nature of man as well as his assumptions about the idea of God. Community lies at the root of Macmurray's comprehension of religion and religion at the same time is at the very heart of Macmurray's conception of community.

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134. RE p.257

## CHAPTER 9

### A General Critique of Macmurray's View of Community and Society



Macmurray's conception of society is directly linked to his understanding of community, since his explanation of society is in terms of his assumption that society possess certain characteristics that are antagonistic to community. In Christian ethics, especially in so far as it is concerned with relations between human beings, the understanding of human groups moves between two poles, which are represented by F. Toennies classical dichotomy of Gemeinschaft (community) and Gesellschaft (society). One pole is the intimate, personal group, i.e. community, which is understood as being "intimate, private and exclusive living together".<sup>1</sup> The other pole is Gesellschaft, i.e. the 'public life'<sup>2</sup> or the functional associations of mankind. Macmurray also knowingly or unknowingly worked within this framework using these two general categories, i.e. personal and impersonal relations. Within contemporary Christian social ethics one finds one or the other of these categories being favoured. The ethics of the communal, interpersonal understanding, i.e. of Gemeinschaft, stresses the importance of the church as a community of believers which resembles the general approach of such thinkers as F.D. Maurice and Paul Lehmann. On the other hand some contemporary thinkers stress the associational or functional, which is an attempt to apply the doctrines of the church to the conflict between states and to other impersonal structures; an approach which resembles the preoccupations of Reinhold Niebuhr.<sup>3</sup> Macmurray undoubtedly favours the Gemeinschaft interpretation of religion, and works within a modified form of Toennies' dichotomy of human groups.

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1. Toennies, Ferdinand Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft: Ahandlung des Communismus und des Socialismus also Empirischer Culturform (Leipzig: Fues's Verlag, 1887) trans. P Loomis (London: Routledge; Kegan Paul 1955) p.33

2. Ibid

3. Gustafson, James "Society" A Handbook of Christian Theology (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1958) p.353

Macmurray presupposed a dichotomy that closely paralleled the dichotomy of Toennies. This approach raises two problems. Firstly it appears to lead to a false division of human groups into two contrasted groups or categories. Secondly, it seems to imply a misunderstanding of human relationships, in order to make this division possible, i.e. making human relationships rigid as opposed to fluid.

One must first analyse Macmurray's use of the term 'society' and contrast this with his use of the concept of 'community'. Macmurray used the term 'society' in two contrasting ways. The first way being in a general sense<sup>4</sup>, which for the moment does not concern this analysis, which refers to all human groups. The second use of the term 'society' is a more specialised use of the term, since it represents a particular type of human group, one of two major groups, the other being community. Macmurray distinguished between these two types of groups by defining society as a group "united in the service of a common purpose".<sup>5</sup> Macmurray contrasted this definition with that of community which is "united in the sharing of a common life".<sup>6</sup> However, Macmurray's differentiation of the two terms is flexible, since the two principles are not exclusive. "Society may be a community".<sup>7</sup> Macmurray clearly asserted in Conditions of Freedom his conception of society:

A Society, in this sense, is a group of persons co-operating in the pursuit of a common purpose. The common purpose creates the association; for if the purpose should disappear, the society will go into dissolution. It also dictates the form of association; since the members must co-operate in the way which will secure the common end; and the ideal form for such an association is the form which realises the common

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4. PR p.127, CS p.97

5. CF p.35

6. CF p.35

7. CF p.35

purpose most efficiently. Each member has his place in the group by reason of what he contributes, in co-operation, to the pursuit of the common end. He is a member in virtue of the function he performs in the group; and the association itself is an organisation of functions. Thus, though the members are persons, and the group is an association of persons, the members are not associated as persons, but only in virtue of the specific functions they perform in relation to the purpose which constitutes the group; and the society is an organic unity, not a personal one. This organic, functional, impersonal character remains even where the common purpose is necessary and permanent.<sup>8</sup>

Macmurray's definition of society has its main purport only when contrasted with community. "We can contrast these two types of human unity by calling the first type -- the personal and religious -- 'community', and the second type -- impersonal and functional -- 'organised society'."<sup>9</sup>

One might go so far as to say that Macmurray's conception of community determines his definition of society.<sup>10</sup> This brings to the fore one of the problems which one confronts when examining Macmurray's use of the terms 'society' and 'community'. The terms 'society' and 'community' are ways of classifying different human groups or unity as well as elements within each group. This confusion between the two is illustrated by the frequently quoted sentence that: "Every community is then a society; but not every society is a community".<sup>11</sup> The confusion between 'society' and 'community' as labels for groups as well as characteristics or principles within group activities is apparent. Macmurray did tend to emphasise one or the other of these two uses. Macmurray wrote that: "A society may be a community, but this is not necessarily so; and even where both principles are effective in the same group, they may be effective in very different degrees. But

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8. CF pp.35-36

9. RAS p.67

10. Jeffko, Walter George "John Macmurray's Logical Form of the Personal" (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: Fordham University, 1970) p.144

11. PR p.146

the principles themselves are radically distinct".<sup>12</sup> Macmurray also wrote that: "We should use the term 'society' to refer to those forms of human association in which the bond of unity is negative or impersonal; and to reserve for the contrasted forms of association which have a positive personal relation as their bond, the term 'community'".<sup>13</sup> It is not clear from Macmurray's use of the terms 'society' and 'community' whether he intended to describe two contrasted human groups or two principles that can be applied to all groups.

### Society

There seems to be three defining characteristics that form Macmurray's conception of society when contrasted with community. The three primary properties, that are exhibited by society, are those of being impersonal, functional and negatively motivated, i.e. motivated by fear. Society is generally referred to as being negatively motivated throughout Macmurray's work, and is accordingly part of the negative mode of morality. The relation between the members of a society are functional; "each plays his allotted part in the achievement of the common end".<sup>14</sup> Society because of the functional aspect of the relation of its members has an organic form; "it is an organisation of functions; and each member is a function of the group".<sup>15</sup> The underlying interpretation of society revolves around the idea that society is for the 'sake of protection',<sup>16</sup> and this presupposes the motivating force of fear. The three properties of society

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12. CF p.35

13. PR p.147

14. PR p.157

15. PR p.157

16. PR p.151

emphasised by Macmurray are the impersonal character of the relation between members of the social group; the negative motivation of the members which is based upon fear; and finally the functional relation between the members of the group and the functional aspect of the individual for the group as a whole. For Macmurray the social life is made of associations which are not personal and therefore are functional. By functional Macmurray means that: "the place of the individual is determined by his function in the group, by the particular service which he renders to the general purpose of the whole".<sup>17</sup>

Macmurray in his discussion of the impersonal, negative mode of human grouping presents two different types of negative mode. Society has two different dispositions. These are the submissive or contemplative mode and the pragmatic or aggressive mode, which are both types of the overall negatively motivated group that is called society.<sup>18</sup> This represents two different ways of interpreting society. Once again Macmurray has returned to his ternary modes of apperception, i.e. Religion, Art and Science, with two negative attitudes and a positive attitude.

The pragmatic form of society is the first modal differentiation to be examined. The pragmatic form of society tends towards the identification of the state with society and includes within it the basic ideas of 'power' and 'law'.<sup>19</sup> Macmurray maintained that: "Thomas Hobbes, the father of modern political theory, provides an almost perfect example of an analysis of society in the pragmatic mode of apperception".<sup>20</sup> The origins of the pragmatic apperception of society stems from the Roman tradition. The Romans "invented the State as we know it. They

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17. RE p.102

18. PR p.122

19. Jeffko, op. cit., p.145, PR p.133

20. PR p.134

did this by conceiving law as technology for keeping the peace, and by unifying in one society, by the administration of a homogeneous law, backed by force, peoples and tribes who were in most other respects, and especially in culture heterogeneous".<sup>21</sup>

Macmurray's understanding of the pragmatic disposition centres upon Hobbes' understanding of the nature of the state. Macmurray wrote of Hobbes' analysis that it reveals that: "the persons who compose society are, by nature, isolated units, afraid of one another, and continuously on the defensive".<sup>22</sup> The extremes of negative motivation are embodied in the pragmatic or aggressive mode. Hobbes maintained that since man is rational he realises that it is necessary to be united in a society. "To act rationally is to use the right means to secure his ends, and secure them with the least expenditure of energy."<sup>23</sup> This is taken one further step. "Action involves co-operation with the Other, and it is impossible to live rationally unless this co-operation is forthcoming."<sup>24</sup> This realisation brings about a general agreement which limits the general aggressiveness in accordance with an agreed upon plan. Society is reason in contradistinction to nature. The unity of society is created by constructing the state, which provides the social bond even though this bond is an external one.<sup>25</sup> The power of the state defends the individual from the self-interest of his neighbours. Hobbes' approach as summarised by Macmurray was that: "Its members are negatively charged

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21. PR p.133

22. PR p.134

23. PR p.135

24. PR p.135

25. Jeffko, op. cit., p.146



particles which mutually repel one another. To hold them together an 'impressed force' is required, strong enough to overcome their centrifugal tendencies."<sup>26</sup> The Hobbesian formulation is the completely logical approach to society which is mirrored in actual society when the intentional is displaced entirely by the practical. "The pragmatic mode of society, then is society maintained by power, and it identifies society with the State, ... It conceives the structure of society in terms of law -- whether moral or civil law -- and its maintenance is achieved by power."<sup>27</sup> This is the mechanical or scientific conception or apperception of society.

The antithesis of the pragmatic, mechanical <sup>and</sup> approach is the contemplative mode which can best be understood according to Macmurray when one searches through the criticisms that have been levelled at the Hobbesian thesis, i.e. in reaction to the pragmatic mode. Macmurray concluded about Hobbes' approach that: "The criticism may be put most stringently by saying that Hobbes is wrong in thinking that there is nothing in human nature to act as a bond of unity between man and man."<sup>28</sup> The basic error of the Hobbesian thesis of society revolves around his fallacious assumptions about human motivation. Hobbes had unrealistically stressed the self-seeking component of human nature as well as the countervailing force of human reason. The idea of men continually calculating their social relationships in terms of self-interest, i.e. a war of all against all, cannot be accepted as the normal state of affairs.

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26. PR p.137

27. PR p.137

28. PR p.138



The antithesis of Hobbes is to be found in the works of Rousseau and the Romantic movement. Rousseauism is anti-Hobbesian and consequently "finds the bond of society in man's 'animal' nature and the source of hostility and conflict in reason".<sup>29</sup> This approach is organic since the assumption is that society is not one actual thing, but in the process of becoming. "For being organic it grows, and its present tensions and conflicts only appear to contradict this."<sup>30</sup> Progress is then seen to be inevitable; it is a natural process, and the conservative effort to bring about stabilisation is the negative phase of the tension by which society progresses. However, since one has not reached the ideal but exists in society at the present state of development, there still exists the desire among the members of the society for the realisation of the idealised end. "Our frantic efforts to resist the actual and to escape from its tensions and conflicts arise from the desire to have the future harmony here and now."<sup>31</sup> The solution is to identify with the ideal end, and identify our individual wills with the general will of society, then we will find satisfaction in performing our own function in the social whole. Macmurray's summary of the Rousseauistic thesis was that:

We will act from our general will as members of society, willing the general good, not from our particular wills as individuals seeking vainly to secure their immediate individual interests. And since our being is really a social being, and our existence as independent individuals is an illusion, the general will is our real will, and our will for private self-interest is only a distorted appearance.<sup>32</sup>

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29. PR p.140

30. PR p.140

31. PR p.141

32. PR p.141

The contemplative mode of society requires that the individual submits to the general will. Macmurray concluded that such an approach might bring about a divided self. "The self that apperceives life in this fashion is an isolated and therefore a divided self."<sup>33</sup> There is the dualism of the self as spectator and the self as participant.

The Rousseauistic thesis is based upon the negative apperception. The members of Rousseau's hypothetical society are isolated individuals, since the artistic mode stresses the single human being. The basic question raised by such a thesis for Macmurray is whether the unification of the members of an association can be accomplished without the individual losing his identity when he is immersed in the general will. Macmurray concluded that: "It is possible to have such a society by mystical self-identification with the whole of which I form a part."<sup>34</sup> Mysticism for Macmurray is an essential element in all contemplative and aesthetic reflective experiences. Macmurray defined mysticism as "self-identification with the whole, with the other that includes one self ..."<sup>35</sup> The contemplative society is based upon the voluntary capitulation of the individual to the whole as being opposed to the individual being forced by coercion.

Both of these modes of society are "ambivalent expressions of the same negative motivation".<sup>36</sup> One can be transformed into the other. An example of this transformation is the ease in which the democratic state is transmuted into the totalitarian state. Both of

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33. PR p.142

34. PR p.143

35. PR p.143

36. PR p.145

these modes or forms of society are in complete contrast with the positive mode of apperception of human unity, i.e. community. Macmurray maintained that our whole social tradition is based upon a negative apperception presented by these two negative modal differentiations of society.

There is, however, a basic omission in Macmurray's discussion of the two modal differentiations of society. Macmurray failed to explain how each mode contributes to the overall negative aspect of society. Macmurray did not indicate in what way these modal differentiations combine in the general fabric of human groups. Macmurray did not spell out how the two modal differentiations combined and contrasted with community. Although Macmurray did indicate that "the reality of community implies society in both forms".<sup>37</sup> Jeffko after commenting upon this deficiency, then tried to extrapolate from the clues contained within Macmurray's writings what elements in community contrast with the two modes of society. The pragmatic mode contrasts with the general principles within a community and the contemplative mode contrasts with the common good of the community, or the common desire to live together.<sup>38</sup> However, Macmurray's failure to offer a clear correlation between the elements in the two modes of society and the positive mode of community is a clue to the difficulty of drawing boundaries between different human groups, since each group contains all the necessary elements to become either personal or impersonal. Any set of categories, which are applied to any form of human unity is apt to be either so imprecise as to be useless or it will be too rigid, and consequently it will distort the reality of human groups.

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37. PR p.176

38. Jeffko, op. cit., pp.152-153

An example of the imprecision of Macmurray's categories is his understanding of the perfect or ideal State, which shows he favoured the integration of the Rousseauistic and Hobbesian modes of society although there is no direct evidence that he favoured the general integration of the mechanistic and organic conceptions of society. Macmurray averred that: "the State is a set of technical devices for the development and maintenance of law".<sup>39</sup> However, in a more Rousseauistic vein Macmurray maintained that: "The State is, thus, the central institution of society; that is to say of the functional association of a human group. It is organic, not personal."<sup>40</sup> A free society depends upon all members of the society being able to meet together. Since the possibility of anarchy comes into being with large numbers of people the state becomes a device to escape anarchy. However, Macmurray clearly rejected the idea of the 'collective-individual' or the 'state-personality'<sup>41</sup> as being destructive. Macmurray combined the two negative modes, i.e. Macmurray assumed that the mechanical aspect of the state could help the voluntary forms of self-government. He gave equal weight to both the contemplative and pragmatic modes of society. Macmurray saw the need for the existence of both devices, i.e. the mechanical mode of society and the voluntary self-government of the organic mode of society, in particular, in his theory of the state. Macmurray did find the separate contrasted categories of society rather restricting when describing his theory of the ideal state.

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39. PR p.198

40. CF p.35

41. CH p.216

One should not only look at the types of societies Macmurray proposed, but also at his conception of the negative motivation behind society, i.e. fear. All societies are based by definition upon a negative motivation which is essentially fear.<sup>42</sup> Negative motivation is the fear of the other.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, fear not love determines society. Fear in animals is in terms of the perception of the immediate danger being confronted. Fear in the human is not instinctive as in animals, "but a pervasive attitude referring to the whole range of possible danger which the foresight of rational knowledge reveals to consciousness".<sup>44</sup> Macmurray maintained that: "Fear, as a personal motive, is at once fear of the other and fear for oneself."<sup>45</sup> Both love and fear are constitutive of the relation between persons. Love and fear are part of the same set of operations within the relations between persons. The original motivation of the personal is bipolar; love and fear are "the positive and negative poles of a single motivation".<sup>46</sup> Macmurray's presupposition that fear and love are part of the same overall set of relationships brings one back to the question of whether or not groups are different or whether there are certain factors that are more dominant within each human group. The singular emotional source of fear and love as the motivating forces within human groups makes the classification of human groups in terms of a dominant factor feasible without actually separating the groups into two different categories. Within every group love and fear exists and the possibility for both always exists.

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42. Jeffko, op. cit., p.131

43. PR p.156

44. CS pp.45-46

45. PR p.70

46. PR p.70

Therefore, one has room to doubt Macmurray's proposal that assumes a basically negative or positive motivation for a particular group, since both are found within a single relationship, which means that the pivotal element for determining whether a group is a society or community is very imprecise or misleading.

Macmurray realised that societies like communities produce religions or pseudo-religions, but he maintained that the religions were warped since they were based upon fear instead of love. The pragmatic society creates a religion that produces a "spiritual technology; an armoury of devices to control the forces which determine practical success or failure, but which are beyond the reach of ordinary human power; a set of ritual devices which placate the hostility or enlist the favour of the divine".<sup>47</sup> On the other hand the contemplative apperception creates a religion, that is "idealist or 'purely spiritual'. Such a religion tends in various manners to be other-worldly for it is characteristically the representation of an ideal community which is hoped for and imagined, but not intended in practice".<sup>48</sup> Religion in both cases since it is based upon fear becomes unreal. This enlightening analysis demonstrates the constructive aspects of Macmurray's understanding of society. However, this analysis fails to indicate whether this is a classification of certain 'pseudo-religious groups' or a recognition of certain religious deviations. Once again the question of whether Macmurray is discussing two separate principles or two archetypal groups is unclear.

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47. PR p.171

48. PR.p.171



### Principle or Division

The basic question that remains unanswered is whether Macmurray conceives of society and community as two different types of human groups as did F. Toennies or whether these two principles are really manifestations of different factors within all groups. Toennies divided groups into two rather rigid types, i.e. into 'community' and 'society' (sometimes referred to as association). The determining factor is what type of will is manifested; the former group is founded upon the vital or essential will while the latter rests upon the rational or utilitarian will.<sup>49</sup> A parallel set of factors that resemble Macmurray's two basic categories of personal and impersonal.

Toennies wrote that: "The Group which is formed through this positive relationship is called an association (Verbindung) when conceived of as a thing or being which acts as a unit inwardly and outwardly. The relationship itself, and also the resulting association is conceived of either as real and organic -- this is the essential characteristic of the Gemeinschaft (community); or as imaginary and mechanical structure -- this is the concept of Gesellschaft (society)."<sup>50</sup> Within the category of Gemeinschaft fall family life, village life and town life and within the category of Gesellschaft fall city life, national life and cosmopolitan life which includes trade, industry and science.<sup>51</sup> Toennies also presented two different views of human will. There are for Toennies two meanings for the term 'will': "Each represents an inherent whole which unites in itself a multiplicity of

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49. Stark, Werner Social Theory and Christian Thought (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1958) pp.6-7

50. Toennies, op. cit., p.33

51. Ibid p.119.



feelings, instincts, and desires. This unity would in the first case be understood as a real or natural one; in the second case as a conceptual or artificial one. The will of the human being in the first form I will call natural will (Wesenwille); and in the second form rational will (Kürwille)".<sup>52</sup> Wesenwille forms the basis of Gemeinschaft, whereas Kürwille provides the foundation for Gesellschaft.

Macmurray in some ways paralleled Toennies' understanding and categorisation of society. Toennies divided groups according to whether or not one or the other type of will was present, while Macmurray did so in terms of what type of motivation was present. The problem revolves around whether or not Macmurray meant as did Toennies, to fit each group in human society into a particular category, or whether Macmurray intended to stress the differences within each group and the principles operating within each group. There are differences between Macmurray's approach and Toennies' approach for example in their views of the State. Toennies has a mechanically oriented Hobbesian view of the State, whereas Macmurray combined the Rousseauistic and Hobbesian view of the State,<sup>53</sup> which is directly due to Macmurray's utilisation of more categories than Toennies. There are, nevertheless, similarities between both men's approach to the classification of groups, such as the division between intimate and utilitarian groups. There are several criticisms that have been levelled at Toennies that are also applicable to Macmurray's bifurcation of human grouping. Johannes Messner, in Social Ethics: Natural Law in the Western World considered the emphasis of Toennies to be misleading in his distinction between community and society, i.e. Gemeinshcaft and Gesellschaft, Messner pointed out that:

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52. Ibid p.119

53. Ibid pp.250-251

The pair of categories in the form invented by him (Toennies) can hardly be maintained from the point of view of social philosophy or even of empirical sociology. Purposes also have an essential determining influence on 'communities' -- that is, the existential ends -- especially the latter of the free selective will of their members. On the other hand, the employers and employees of a firm may go beyond the mere fulfillment of their individual functions and form a community in the true sense, if their co-operation is instinct with mutual trust and if all common concerns are settled in concert, that is, if the principles of justice and charity govern their co-operation. In fact, all functional associations are at least indirectly connected with existential ends, and hence each 'society' is subject to demands which do not permit it to constitute itself and to act solely in accordance with arbitrary will. This does not mean, of course, that, for instance, the workers, managers, directors and shareholders in a company need cultivate affection for one another, but it certainly implies that their relations must be inspired by mutual respect, justice, and benevolence, and thus be guided by a spirit of partnership.<sup>54</sup>

Macmurray's conceptualisation of groups divided in terms of fear and love admits such a criticism since neither of the two forms are entirely free of either feature, although Macmurray's dichotomy does not seem to be as rigid in his proposed categories as Toennies.

Messner also makes a practical objection to Toennies' categories. He pointed out that the term 'society' "in the wider sense comprises all social forms, both true communities and functional associations".<sup>55</sup>

Messner noted the confusion between the two uses of the term society in Toennies work since it denoted both a general field and a specific category. Macmurray also caused some confusion when using society in both ways which could lead to misrepresentation.<sup>56</sup> The danger of any rigid dichotomy between society and community lies in the ever present

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54. Messner, Johannes Social Ethics: Natural Law in the Western World (London, St. Louis: B Hender Book Co., 1958) p.101

55. Ibid pp.101-102

56. Jeffko, op. cit., p.151

possibility that one might place a group into the negative or positive mode of apperception for marginal reasons and then conclude that the group was either evil or good because of it being placed in one or the other of the modes. How rigid is Macmurray's dichotomy and is Macmurray of the view that groups or principles are separate or part of the same general phenomenon? Macmurray stated that: "Every community is then a society; but not every society a community."<sup>57</sup> This implies an interdependence or interplay between the two categories, even though he is willing to isolate society from community, although he is unwilling to postulate a community without a society. If one postulates a society without a community or the aspect of a community then some societies can be construed as being totally evil since they are motivated by self-interest combined with unrealistic idealism and fear -- such a belief seemed more realistic during Hitler's dominance of Europe. However, as Messner points out it is not possible to say that any functional association or society is totally negative. It would seem more realistic to assume that even though there are two distinct principles or factors in operation within each group, the extremes of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft do not exist. Macmurray certainly did not advocate a rigid system of categories such as those of Toennies. However, he did seem to wish to classify a particular group as either 'community' or 'society' which makes these categories more than just principles.

How did Macmurray's understanding of 'society' and 'community' compare with certain thinkers within the field of Christian Ethics? As has been noted Macmurray falls somewhere between the negative view of society in general, i.e. one that is completely dominated by self-

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57. PR p.146

interest as in the work of Reinhold Niebuhr, and Paul Lehmann's more positive view of human groups. These two views represent two poles within Christian Ethics; one dominated by the idea of community and the other dominated by the idea of the self-interested individual in society.

Reinhold Niebuhr adhered to the thesis that "group relations can never be as ethical as those which characterise individual relations".<sup>58</sup> Niebuhr maintained that any social co-operation larger than the most intimate social group requires "a measure of coercion".<sup>59</sup> Although Niebuhr favoured the mechanical approach to society he appreciated the existence of the voluntary elements within society. "While no state can maintain its unity purely by coercion. Where the factor of mutual consent is strongly developed, and where standardised and approximately fair methods of adjudicating and resolving conflicting interests within an organised group have been established, the coercive factor in social life is frequently covert, and becomes apparent only in moments of crisis and in the group's policy towards recalcitrant individuals. Yet it is never absent."<sup>60</sup> Niebuhr viewed the problem as being "The increased power of collective self-interest compared with individual self-interest".<sup>61</sup> Niebuhr saw within any group a real potential for evil. "A distinction between group pride and the egoism

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58. Niebuhr, Reinhold Moral Man and Immoral Society (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932) (1960) p.83 hereafter cited as MMIS

59. MMIS p.3

60. MMIS pp.3-4

61. Niebuhr, Reinhold Man's Nature and His Communities (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1966) p.47

of individuals is necessary, furthermore, because the pretensions and claims of a collective or social self exceed those of the individual ego."<sup>62</sup> Niebuhr also pointed out that: "The group is more arrogant, hypocritical, self-centred and more ruthless in the pursuit of its ends than the individual."<sup>63</sup>

Paul Lehmann represents the other end of the spectrum, since he considered the solution of the problem of Christian Ethics to be solvable in terms of the existing fellowship (koinonia) of Christians. Lehmann considers morality to be communal as opposed to an individual matter.<sup>64</sup> Lehmann has a positive approach to the group in particular the Christian fellowship, i.e. koinonia:

In the koinonia a continuing experiment is going on in the concrete reality and possibility of man's inter-relatedness and openness for man. In the koinonia ethical theory and practice acquire a framework of meaning and a pattern of action which undergird the diversity and the complexity of the concrete ethical situation with vitality and purpose.<sup>65</sup>

Macmurray offered a way of reconciling these two approaches by showing the two separate elements of community and society that are present in society in its general sense. The 'society' represents the Niebuhrian conception of the group, whereas 'community' contains the basic elements of Lehmann's koinonia. Although this separation does have its attractions one should note the lack of any real separation in terms of one group from another, i.e. one being pure Niebuhrian and

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62. Niebuhr, Reinhold The Nature and Destiny of Man (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941) Vol.1, p.208

63. Ibid

64. Long, Edward LeRoy, Jr., A Survey of Christian Ethics (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967) pp.158-159

65. Lehmann, Paul L. Ethics in a Christian Context (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1963) p.131

the other being a pure koinonia. Macmurray's thesis did tackle constructively the opposing problems of group perfection and imperfection. However, Macmurray did try to place some groups within one category, however, such a drastic separation does present problems. However, there is also the possibility with Macmurray's presuppositions about human unity to approach all groups as having the potential for self-seeking and self-giving if the categories are treated as principles. Macmurray recognised the underlying negative and positive aspects of human relations that are to be found within the groups that make up human unity. If one were to modify Macmurray's statement to read that all communities are societies and all societies are communities in potential, then this would be closer to the Christian view that man has an equal potential for good and evil in all situations.

There are two fundamental weaknesses in Macmurray's thinking about community. The first is his rather ambiguous use of the two contrasted categories of 'society' and 'community', since he neither makes them simply principles nor actual divisions within human groups. If one assumes that Macmurray was proposing two divisions of human groups with one having two sub-divisions, in which one may place particular groups, then one is confronted with the impossibility of placing actual groups into rigid categories since actual groups display both sets of features used in dividing them into classes. One also has the added danger of assuming that these categories do determine whether a group is evil or good. Classification of human groups except in the cases which are themselves removed from normal human existence, fails to work.



However, if 'society' and 'community' are viewed as representing two principles, one is left to face the inherent paradox contained within the definition of community. Community must be all inclusive since it is based on love and yet it is built upon the exclusive 'I-Thou' relation, that is weakened by each person that is included in the communal group.

Community is forced to become society because of its need to include other members and it consequently destroys direct relations. All human groups or associations beyond the most rudimentary must be, using Macmurray's principles, societies. Each group may contain elements of community, but it can never become a proper community. However, true community is necessary in order to achieve total free co-operation and true friendship. "We cannot realise community in practice nor can we dispense with it."<sup>66</sup> Community becomes an unrealisable ideal, which is in direct opposition to Macmurray's aim, which was to find an empirical foundation for religion.

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66. Harris, Errol E. "Review of John Macmurray's Persons in Relation in International Philosophical Quarterly (Sept. 1962) Vol.2 No.3, p.480



CHAPTER 10

A Critique of Macmurray's  
Communal View of the Self

Macmurray's conception of the self is intimately interwoven with his conception of the community, since he defined the self in terms of the mutual, relational aspect of human nature. Therefore, an investigation of the community in terms of the way it is associated with the conception of the self will be helpful in a general critical investigation of Macmurray's theories about community. The partial inability of community to fully explain the human self, an assumption that lies at the very roots of Macmurray's thought, reveals the precariousness of Macmurray's employment of the concept of community as the primary focal point in his explanation of human nature.

The most fundamental question one must ask about Macmurray's conception of human nature with its stress upon the communal is whether such a dependence upon the evolutionary process of self-realisation through mutual, reciprocal relationships ignores the uniqueness and the isolation of each individual from his fellows. Macmurray in his definition of the self considered the essence of the self, when reduced to its basic essentials to be centred upon human relationships. Macmurray's understanding of the self, which depends upon his conception of community, is defined in terms of the concepts of mutuality and reciprocity, which inevitably stresses the interdependence of human beings. However, the value of such an assumption is questionable, since it slurs over the uniqueness of the individual as well as the problem of isolation that affects each person.

Does Macmurray deny, by reducing the self to elements which are basically relational, the uniqueness of the individual? Is the individual merely a product of the personal and mutual inter-relationship with other persons and groups of persons? Does Macmurray's approach to the self neglect the unique, individual side of the equation while

over-stressing the relational, social side of the equation? Does the 'I-Thou' relation fully explain the self?

For Macmurray the isolated self is an abstraction and does not exist in any other way; a dismissal that has been noted by John Macquarrie.<sup>1</sup> For Macmurray the self is a product of reciprocal relationships and has no meaning outside of those relationships. In one of Macmurray's earliest works this point of view is starkly expressed. "The self is one term in a relation between two selves. It cannot be prior to that relation and equally, of course, the relation cannot be prior to it. 'I' exist only as one member of the 'you' and I'. The self only exists in the communion of the selves."<sup>2</sup> Macmurray limited his definition of the self to the sphere of the relations between two or more persons. In one of Macmurray's later works he consistently maintained that:

Individual independence is an illusion and the independent individual, the isolated self, is a nonentity. In ourselves we are nothing; and when we turn our eyes inward in search of ourselves we find a vacuum. Being nothing in ourselves, we have no value in ourselves; and are of no importance whatever, wholly without meaning or significance. It is only in relation to others that we exist.<sup>3</sup>

This type of approach echoes the work of Hume. In A Treatise of Human Nature Hume contended that:

... when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never catch myself at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception. When my perceptions are removed for any time, as by sound sleep; so long am I insensible of myself, and may truly be said not to exist.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Macquarrie, John Twentieth-Century Religious Thought (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1963) p.207, hereafter cited as TCR
  2. IU p.137
  3. PR p.211
  4. Hume, David A Treatise of Human Nature (London: Oxford University Press, 1968) p.252

Hume took great pains to point out that there is no direct or immediate experience of the self. Macmurray, however, wished to base his conception of the self upon experience, i.e. a particular experience. Therefore, Macmurray chose to base his conception of the self upon the only experience that he considered applicable which is the personal relationships with other persons. In The Self as Agent Macmurray underlined the communal nature of the self. "If then there is to be a self there must also be another in space and time. The self cannot exist in isolation."<sup>5</sup> Macmurray rigorously maintained that the self does not exist outside of the 'I-Thou' experience, i.e. the immediate experience of the mutual, reciprocal relation with another. Although Macmurray, unlike Hume, maintained that the self is more than just a group of passing experiences, there is still a danger in confining the apprehension of the self to mutual, reciprocal relational experiences, which are concentrated in the community. Frondizi in The Nature of the Self maintained that:

Numerous other instances can be offered as evidence of the existence of 'something more' than the experience, a plus which can be reduced neither to an experience nor to the experiential stream which we usually call the 'self'. Besides learning, decision and repentance, many other psychological facts namely promise, self-respect, hope, humiliation, dignity, worry, ... something permanent exists which explains the possibility of anticipating future experience...<sup>6</sup>

In confining his definition of the self to the experience of the other through relation, i.e. to the community when viewed at its most basic level, Macmurray overlooked the 'something more' or the 'plus' aspect of the self. However, this does not in any way discount the fact that the self has, as a primary component, the relational experience. Nevertheless, such a one-sided view of the self is bound to raise questions about the veracity of Macmurray's approach.

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5. SA p.142

6. Frondizi, Risieri, The Nature of the Self: A Functional Interpretation (London: Oxford University Press, 1953) p.125

The 'I-Thou' or relational understanding of the concept of the self is not confined to Macmurray. The school of thought that considers the relationship between I and the other to be of seminal importance is sometimes labelled the personalist school. There are a number of thinkers in the personalist school of thought that have an affinity with Macmurray. Macmurray has been classed by commentators as a personalist, i.e. Macmurray's thinking is concurrent and in agreement with the personalist approach although it is separate from the mainstream of personalism. Peter A. Bertocci's definition of personalism illustrates that Macmurray did employ some of the same terms and frames of reference as the personalists. Bertocci centres his definition of personalism around the 'self-existent' person which he defines in a similar way to Macmurray who also has as his focal point the personal. Bertocci considers the person to be "a complex unity of activities ... Further, a person is a self-conscious agent, free within limits to develop in accordance with ideals of truth, love and of aesthetic and religious sensitivity".<sup>7</sup> Macquarrie loosely categorises Macmurray with the rest of the personalists, although he is aware that Macmurray is 'somewhat apart' from the other writers, that centre their work around the concept of personal being, such as Martin Buber and Nicholas Berdyaev.<sup>8</sup> Maurice Friedman holds that Macmurray's thought significantly paralleled Buber's thought without influencing it or being influenced by it. However, this does not do full justice to Macmurray's own analysis of his development.<sup>9</sup>

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7. Bertocci, Peter A., "The Perspective of a Teleological Personalistic Idealist" in John E Smith's Contemporary American Philosophy (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1970) p.249

8. TCR p.206

9. Vos, Kenneth Duane, "The Contribution of Edmond Cahn, H. Richard Niebuhr and John Macmurray to the Ethics of Responsibility" (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: Columbia University, 1972) pp.189-190

Macmurray in his Swarthmore Lectures acknowledged his early debt to Martin Buber to whom he turned to in his search for religious insight. "I found myself in these things much closer to the prophetic insight of one of the very greatest of modern thinkers, Martin Buber."<sup>10</sup>

#### Buber and Mead

Macmurray's and Buber's ideas coincide in their approach to the self. Macquarrie noted that: "like Buber, Macmurray thinks that an isolated self is an unreal abstraction".<sup>11</sup> Paul Pfuetze notes the connection between Buber, Mead and Macmurray. However, it is outside the scope of this paper to investigate the full degree of agreement or disagreement between Macmurray's philosophy and the philosophies of the personalists. Nevertheless, it will be profitable to compare Macmurray's philosophy with that of Martin Buber, as well as with the thought of George Herbert Mead, a leading social behaviourist.

Mead's thought conforms with Macmurray's thought in several ways. A critical question for Mead, Buber, and Macmurray is whether an individual becomes a self in and through relations, or whether an a priori self enters into relations with other selves.<sup>12</sup> The self for Macmurray is a product of relationships since one only exists in terms of the relational.<sup>13</sup> The self only comes into being after the encounter with the other. Macmurray rejected the idea of an a priori self. "The self does not first know itself and determine an objective; and then discover the other in carrying out its intention."<sup>14</sup> George Herbert Mead, like Macmurray, maintained that: "The self is something

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10. SRR p.24

11. TCR p.207

12. Pfuetze, Paul The Social Self (New York: Bookman Associates, 1954) pp.313-314, hereafter cited as SS

13. PR pp.17 and 211

14. SA p.109



which has a development; it is not initially there at birth, but arises in the process of social experience and activity, that is, develops in the given individual as a result of his relations to that process as a whole and to other individuals within that process."<sup>15</sup> Pfuetze points out that Mead is not very convincing or consistent in his demonstration of the exclusively social character of the self.<sup>16</sup> Buber on the other hand seems to put the emphasis neither upon the individual nor upon the social when searching for the fundamental reality of human existence. The basic reality for Buber is 'man with man' which focuses the investigation upon the 'between'.<sup>17</sup> Buber asserted that: "The view which establishes the concept of the 'between' is to be acquired by no longer localising the relation between human beings, as is customary, either within the individual soul or in a general world which embraces and determines them."<sup>18</sup> Although there is an element of ambiguity in Buber's writings on this subject, his position is best summarised as follows: "a person does not first exist as an individual form and then enter into communication with others. It is rather in that communication that he becomes or is a person."<sup>19</sup> John Macmurray's thinking parallels Buber's and Mead's concentration upon the relational feature of the self. Macmurray's, Mead's and Buber's views

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15. Mead, George Herbert, Mind, Self and Society: From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviourist (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1974) (first published 1934) p.135 hereafter cited as MSS

16. SS p.251

17. SS p.251

18. Buber, Martin, Between Man and Man (London: Kegan Paul, 1947) trans. by Ronald G. Smith, p.203, hereafter cited as BMM

19. SS p.251



revolve around the dialogue of the self and the other, i.e. the 'I-Thou'. It must be noted that Macmurray's twofold approach to relationships, i.e. the personal and impersonal relational types, is very close to Buber's categories of 'I-Thou' and 'I-It'. Buber's and Mead's general position which is almost equivalent to Macmurray's position is that: "what is uniquely characteristic and constitutive of the human world is something that takes place between one person and another in community. Man's essential nature is not grasped from what unfolds in the individual's life, but from the distinctiveness of his relation to things, to other living beings, and (Buber would add) to God".<sup>20</sup>

Macmurray's assertion that: "Without an other there can be no self",<sup>21</sup> lies somewhere between Mead and Buber. Mead's premise is that: "For social psychology, the whole (society) is prior to the part (individual), not the part to the whole; and the part is explained in terms of the whole, not the whole in terms of the part."<sup>22</sup> This logically follows from the perception of the individual in purely relational terms. By stressing the relational, one introduces the tendency to consider the whole of society before the individual, which could have deep ramifications for any ethical system based upon such an understanding of human nature. Mead concluded that the self was basically a social process.<sup>23</sup> Buber on the other hand did speak of an 'a priori to relations' which recognised that something exists before the contact with the other. Buber recognised that there was at least a potential that existed before the relationship. Macmurray did

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20. Pfuetze, Paul E. "Martin Buber and American Pragmatism", in Schlipp, P.A. and Friedman, M. The Philosophy of Martin Buber London: Cambridge University Press, 1967) pp.529-320 hereafter cited as PMB

21. SA p.142

22. MSS p.7

23. MSS p.178

not seem to concede the possibility of an 'a priori to relations', since for him the very basis of the self lies in the activity surrounding the reciprocal relationship with a vacuum preceding this relationship. Macmurray has concluded that the knowledge of the other furnishes the very basis of experience as well as the self. Macmurray was convinced that: "To be a person is to be in communication with the other. The knowledge of the other is the absolute presupposition of all knowledge and as such is necessarily indemonstrable."<sup>24</sup> Macmurray at times comes close to Mead's point of view that the individual is a product of the social situation in which he finds himself. Macmurray like Mead, tended to disregard or even dismiss the self as subject. Mead stated that: "The individual enters as such into his own experience only as an object, not as a subject; and he can enter as an object only on the basis of social relations and interaction, only by means of his experiential transactions with other individuals in an organised social environment."<sup>25</sup>

The basic question for Macmurray as well as for Mead and Buber revolves around whether or not one can assume that there exists an antecedent self or only an antecedent society. Paul Pfuete proposes the third alternative of a 'twin-born' approach, i.e. a simultaneous emergence of society and self.<sup>26</sup> Macmurray certainly would have agreed with the antecedent view of society although he would not have rejected out of hand the 'twin-born' conception of society and the self; he certainly would have rejected the idea of an antecedent self.

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24. PR p.77

25. MSS p.225

26. SS p.249

One telling criticism of Mead's "social antecedent explanation" of the self lies in his confusion of the conditions of knowledge, which includes self-knowledge, with the content of knowledge.<sup>27</sup>

Mead maintained that:

The individual experiences himself as such, not directly, but only indirectly, from the particular standpoints of the individual members of the same social group, or from the generalised standpoint of the social group as a whole to which he belongs. For he enters his own experience as a self or individual, not directly or immediately, not by becoming a subject to himself, but only in so far as he first becomes an object to himself just as other individuals are objects to him or in his experience; and he becomes an object to himself only by taking the attitudes of other individuals towards himself within a social environment or context of experience and behaviour in which both he and they are involved.<sup>28</sup>

These remarks are echoed in Macmurray's denial of the existence of the self as subject and his conception of mutuality. Mead seemed to be assuming that all there is to be known about oneself is what is available to others, and that one can acquire knowledge of oneself only by taking on the attitudes of other. However, such an assumption is questionable. Hamlyn in his criticisms of Mead stated that:

It is true that the existence of a social context is necessary for the initial acquisition of knowledge about oneself, it may sometimes be true that one can get to know certain things about oneself only through the attitudes of others, and it may be true that our own attitudes to ourselves may be considerably influenced by the attitudes of others. None of that, however, adds up to the point that Mead seems to want to make — the knowledge of myself is simply the knowledge that others have of me.<sup>29</sup>

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27. Hamlyn, David "Self Knowledge" in Mischel, Theodore The Self: Psychological and Philosophical Issues (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1977) p.190

28. MSS p.138

29. Hamlyn, op. cit., pp.190-191

Mead confused the conditions of knowledge with the actual content of the knowledge, i.e. the knowledge itself. The knowledge of self and the accompanying self-realisation which Macmurray saw as dependent upon others may come about through the presence of others, but that is not to say that the knowledge itself is wholly dependent upon others, since to assume this means that the self is only the by-product of a social construction. Social factors are of great importance to the self and the realisation of the self, but one needs to recognise that something exists other than the social.

Mead implied that life is basically social in everything. Although it is quite correct to maintain that the social aspect of man permeates the totality of human existence, one must also realise that the totality of human existence is not confined to its social and communal origins. For example, just because one is involved with the other in the acquisition of knowledge, this does not necessarily mean that the other is the primary source of knowledge. Remy C. Kwant presupposes the autonomy of the individual is necessary for the acquisition of knowledge.<sup>30</sup> Macmurray unequivocally stated that: "to know is to apprehend the other,"<sup>31</sup> which implies that knowledge is dependent upon the other contextually as well as conceptually. Kwant points out that: "others may have helped us by raising the issue or by formulating the question very sharply. But such services are incidental, for there is a question of a genuine understanding only if we make a judgement because we ourselves see the truth of the matter."<sup>32</sup> Kwant maintained that: "For in and through society man obtains the materials of his

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30. Kwant, Remy C. Phenomenology of Social Existence (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Duequesne University Press, 1965) p.61

31. PR p.166

32. Kwant, op. cit., p.61

scientific pursuits, his artistic achievements, his value judgments and his work. But he is dependent in the way in which he takes up these materials. So far as understanding and insight are concerned, as well as genuine artistic vision and judgements of value, he rises above the bonds of his social being."<sup>33</sup> Society is the condition of knowledge and only part of the context of knowledge and not its content. The ambiguity of Macmurray's understanding of knowledge, in particular his conception of self-knowledge, is from his confusion of the context and content of knowledge. This calls into question his comprehension of the self, which lacks a clear awareness of the necessity of the autonomy of the individual in the processes of cognition and understanding, which is necessary for self-knowledge. Macmurray like Mead undervalued the autonomy of the individual which must exist along with the individual's dependence upon the other, otherwise one's thinking and actions are nothing beyond one's encounter with the other, which means that one is in danger of being thought of as part of the social mass with no difference from the social mass.

If one deals only with the relational aspect of man, it makes the recognition of the importance of the autonomy of the person, i.e. his independence, a source of difficulty. Macmurray held that the person has his being in the relationship with the other.<sup>34</sup> Mead and Macmurray to a lesser extent, failed to appreciate as did Buber that: "neither self nor society is the fundamental fact of human existence; the individual and the community are equally primordial and correlative entities".<sup>35</sup> Buber unlike Mead and Macmurray, seemed to posit a transcendental 'subject' as a prior condition of relations.<sup>36</sup> Buber was cognizant

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33. Kwant, op. cit., p.61

34. PR p.17

35. PMB p.532

36. SS p.251

that the 'single one' is threatened by the collective nature of the community.<sup>37</sup> Macmurray with his rejection of the self as subject and the definition of the self in terms of the other does not seem to offer sufficient safeguards against the inherent dangers in the collective nature of the community.

Macmurray's Rejection of the Antecedent Self

The seeds of Macmurray's rejection of the antecedent self lay in his rejection of the self as subject and the subsequent over-dependence upon the relational interpretation of the self.

In his assumptions about the self as a product of social relationships Macmurray has made one telling fallacious assumption in the process of dismissing the possibility of the existence of the self as subject. Macmurray maintained that: "In actuality, the solitary Self can only mean the self in reflection, self-isolated from the world, withdrawn into itself. This is the Self in self-negation, the negative aspect of selfhood or the Self as subject."<sup>38</sup> In Macquarrie's essay about Macmurray, he stated that the error of traditional philosophy for Macmurray "was to take as its starting point 'I think' — the self as subject".<sup>39</sup> The desire on Macmurray's part to replace 'I think' with the new starting point of 'I do', i.e. the self as agent, leads him into disregarding and repudiating the existence of the self as subject. The concept of the self as agent and Macmurray's repudiation of the self as subject is a cornerstone of Macmurray's thought. Macmurray averred that:

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37. BMM pp.66-67

38. SA pp.141-142

39. TCR p.206



The self as subject then is not part of the world it knows, but withdrawn from it, and so, in conception, outside it, or other than its object. But to be part of the world is to exist, while to be excluded from the world is to be non-existent. It follows that the Self exists as agent but not as subject.<sup>40</sup>

Macmurray envisioned the self only in terms of its relation to the world, i.e. only in terms of external relations and since the self as subject is not part of the external world, it does not exist. After rejecting the self as subject one cannot see any possibility of Macmurray being able to accept the concept of the self as existing before the self as object. One must ask whether Macmurray's conclusions about the non-existence of the self as subject is valid, since such an assumption completely repudiates the possibility of an antecedent self, which admits the possible primacy of the group over the individual self.

Although it follows that the self as subject cannot know of its existence, it does not follow that the self as subject does not exist. Macmurray's denial of the self as subject rests upon an incorrect inference. D.D. Raphael in his critical essay and review of The Self As Agent granted that the self as subject "is not a part of the world that it knows."<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, Raphael goes on to assert that:

There is much of the world as a whole (the world of which the Self as agent is part) which the Self as subject does not know. So the fact that the subject is not part of the 'world it knows' (i.e. of that section of the world as a whole which it knows) does not imply that it is not part of the world as a whole, i.e. that it does not exist.<sup>42</sup>

Macmurray's desire to avoid falling into the trap of dualism leads him into another repudiation of the self as subject. Macmurray declared

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40. SA p.91

41. SA p.91

42. Raphael, D.D. "Book Review of The Self as Agent" in The Philosophical Quarterly (1959) IX No. 36. p.274



that:

If then we attempt to represent the Self through the mathematical unity-pattern, the result is necessarily a dualism of mind and body, that is to say, of the Agent-self and the Subject-self. The Self can be represented either as a physical system, or as a mental system, and these two systems exclude one another.<sup>43</sup>

This lead to Macmurray's assumption that: "formally the Self as subject is the negation of the self as agent, and since it is by its own activity that the Self withdraws from action into reflection, its subject-hood is its self-negation".<sup>44</sup> D.D. Raphael has pointed out that this negation is a product of Macmurray's dialectical approach, which hopes to unify the positive and negative in a synthesis, but not a valid representation of reality. Raphael remarked that Macmurray's dialectical logic erroneously required that: "the positive and negative (thesis and antithesis) should be successive, and therefore it cannot represent the Self as both agent and subject at the same time. Yet an adequate form must do this, since when we act we know that we act with thought."<sup>45</sup> Macmurray's erroneous assumption that the self as subject does not exist can be adequately expressed as the self as subject does not know of its existence. Macmurray in denying the existence of the self as subject is only left with the self as agent which implies that the self may be considered only in terms of the self as object, i.e. in terms of the 'I-Thou' relation brought about when the self comes into contact with the other. Macmurray incorrectly presupposed that the self as subject does not exist, thereby making it impossible for him to presuppose an antecedent self. However, such a presupposition of non-existence is

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43. SA p.96

44. SA p.96

45. Raphael, op. cit., pp.274-275.

incorrect in that one may only maintain that the subject does not know of its existence; therefore there is still the possibility of the existence of an antecedent self.

The rejection of the antecedent self induced Bozzo to conclude that Macmurray maintained that: "The common life remains as the necessary preduring substrate of individuality."<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, the community is not the only substratum of the individual. Therefore, one needs to uncover the identity or at least a hint of the identity of the self as subject, i.e. the self before or beyond the relation, since the relational apprehension is inadequate to explain the total actuality of the self. C.A. Campbell recognised the danger of confining any explanation of the self exclusively to the relational. Campbell concluded that:

... it is the subject-mind, the identical 'I' of self-consciousness, which we are trying to account for; and by the route suggested is plainly impossible. For as we have already seen, cognition of relationships, and indeed cognition of any kind whatsoever, presupposes an identical subject conscious of its own identity. It follows that the 'relational' way of explaining self-identity can only be in terms which presuppose the very thing it is purporting to explain.<sup>47</sup>

This inadequacy in the relational approach leads Macmurray to conclude that: "Personal individuality is not an original given fact".<sup>48</sup> A conclusion, that C.A. Campbell foresaw, which itself contradicts the possibility of society, since society depends on the original given fact of unique individuals for its existence. Macmurray's position stems from the belief that the individual "discovers himself as an

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46. Bozzo, Edward George, "Toward a Renewed Fundamental Moral Theology: The Implication of the Thought of John Macmurray for Christian Ethics" (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: Catholic University of America, 1969) p.240

47. Campbell, C.A. On Selfhood and Godhood (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1957) p.79

48. PR p.91

individual by contrasting himself".<sup>49</sup> In reality he does not discover the self, but only the self as agent, i.e. the self as object. Macmurray in limiting the self to the self as agent ignores the self as subject which is the original building material of the individual. C.A. Campbell remarked that: "What we are trying to account for is the identity of a self not for some external observer, but the self itself; the identity of the self as subject, not its identity as an object -- which the self, qua self, just is not."<sup>50</sup> Macmurray's conception of the self in terms of the community, i.e. in terms of one's intimate, personal relations with the other, falls short, since it fails to provide or even suggest a basis for anything more than an external view of the self, which leaves little room for the intrinsically unique individual.

Macmurray's definition of the self stemmed from his assumption that the self as subject did not exist, but that only the relational existed.<sup>51</sup> Macmurray defined the self only in terms of being a part of the reciprocal relationship with the other.

The idea of an isolated agent is self-contradictory. Any agent is necessarily in relation to the Other. Apart from this essential relation he does not exist. But, further, the Other in this constitutive relation must itself be personal. Persons, therefore, are constituted by their mutual relation to one another. 'I' exist only as one element in the complex 'You and I'.<sup>52</sup>

Macmurray saw the relational<sup>a</sup> as the only basic constituent of the self.

"The thesis we have to expound and to sustain is that the self is constituted by its relation to the Other; that it has its being in its relationships ..."<sup>53</sup> Macmurray failed to take into account the

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49. PR p.91

50. Campbell, op. cit., p.79

51. PR p.17

52. PR p.24

53. PR p.17

(a) see footnote 64 p. 243

underlying doubt that debilitates all communication; as well as the doubt surrounding the sharing of experiences by two persons. Macmurray inadequately dealt with the reality that the self qua self is isolated by its very nature, i.e. one might say that the self is 'trapped in its own skull'. R. Niebuhr in The Self and the Dramas of History in his discussion of the self in dialogue enumerates as his first premise that:

The self faces the other self as a mystery which can never be fully penetrated. It can surmise about the internal life of the other self by way of analogy with its own internal dialogue. But these analogies are usually misleading because the dialogues, while very similar in form, may be very dissimilar in content.<sup>54</sup>

Macmurray, although recognising that there are problems with relationships, did not adequately diagnose the deep effect of this doubt or 'mystery'. W.T. Stace has dismissed any logical justification by social instinct or any other irrational feelings,<sup>55</sup> since one also has a feeling of isolation from other men. The social instinct does not prove the existence of other minds and other individuals, which still leaves the feeling of underlying isolation. One cannot ignore the feeling of isolation that comes into conflict with the social instinct. The social instinct does not obviate the feelings of isolation that exist, nor do mutual relations remove the isolation of the self. One must realise there always will be an element of mutual exclusion in all human relationships. C.C.J. Webb in Our Knowledge of One Another although arguing for the inadequacy of the term mutual

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54. Niebuhr, Reinhold, The Self and the Dramas of History (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1956) p.42

55. Stace, W.T., The Theory of Knowledge and Existence (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932) pp.195-196

exclusion was still forced to admit that one is involved in "mutual exclusion in so far as from first to last I am not you and you are not I".<sup>56</sup>

Macmurray's strictly relational view of the self with its accompanying rejection of the isolated self and/or the self as subject threatens to make the integrated individual into nothing more than a part of the group, as opposed to a separate individual which depends upon the group.

Macmurray's stress upon the self as relational threatens to invalidate the fundamental uniqueness of each individual self. Macmurray in his eagerness to reject the isolated self has overlooked or disregarded the uniqueness of the individual. Within the context of the community the uniqueness of each individual can be kept to the fore, since each individual is involved in a singular combination of social relations like the peculiar combination of genes with which he begins life.<sup>57</sup> However, by placing too much stress upon the relational, i.e. the communal, one might depreciate the uniqueness of the individual by coming too close to the collective idea of the self, which has severe ethical ramifications. Relationships have as an a priori condition the unique quality of each individual, as is demonstrated by the bereavement for a specific individual after death.<sup>58</sup> If the uniqueness of the individual was not a fundamental quality of the relationship, then the community would easily take the place of the individual that was lost. A person is irreplaceable for the community and is unique in terms of the community as well as in terms of his genetic structure.

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56. Webb, Clement Charles Julian, "Our Knowledge of One Another" from the Proceedings of the British Academy Vol. XVI (London: Humphrey Milford, 1930) p.16

57. Ginsberg, Morris, Essays in Sociology and Social Philosophy (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1956) p.157

58. Farmer, Herbert H. God and Men (London: Nisbet & Co. Ltd., 1948) p.43



Hume saw the self as a succession of perceptions while Macmurray threatened to reduce the self to a succession of mutual experiences. As James Pratt maintained the self is something essentially unique and sui generis not something that we can visualise.<sup>59</sup> The possibility of the a priori self as subject, i.e. something that comes before the community and its relational aspect, must be considered, since the essential, unique quality of the individual cannot be understood totally as a succession of mutual relational experiences.

Haddox concluded that Macmurray's approach helps to establish the uniqueness of the individual. However, in a revealing comment in defence of Macmurray's stand against solipsism he betrays the danger of placing too much emphasis upon the relational at the expense of the autonomous, unique self. According to Haddox the theoretical standpoint, i.e. solipsism "fails to do justice to our knowledge of other persons, not as 'I's' (where all persons including myself are identical and the token 'I' is used to denote an entity) but as 'you' in your concrete uniqueness."<sup>60</sup> Haddox following Macmurray's lead, places the emphasis upon the other and not upon the self in establishing uniqueness, i.e. the external observed object is unique not the self qua self, which makes uniqueness a quality of the other not of the self. However, the quality of uniqueness is part of the individual and not just a part of the 'I-Thou' encounter. The 'I' and the 'Thou' must both be unique in order for a mutual personal relation to be possible.

The concept of the supreme uniqueness of the individual has been advocated by Max Stirner and F. Nietzsche., Buber although basically relational in his approach, sympathises with the concept of the 'single

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59. Pratt, James B. Personal Realism (New York: Macmillan Company, 1937) p.302

60. Haddox, Michael Bruce, "Action and Religious Knowledge: The Person as Agent in the Thought of John Macmurray" (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: Duke University, 1970) p.145

one' or the 'unique one', i.e. der Einzige. Stirner and Nietzsche commended the concept of egocentrism. Both Stirner and Nietzsche aimed at the highest possible exaltation of the individual.<sup>61</sup> Max Stirner radically rejected the collective ideal and absolutely endorsed the individual. Stirner maintained that: "For me, nothing is above Me... My object is neither good nor bad, neither love nor hatred, my object is my own — and it is unique."<sup>62</sup> Stirner ended his work The Ego and His Own with the following radical exaltation of the individual:

I am owner of my own might, and I am so when I know myself as unique. In the unique one the owner himself returns into his creative nothing, of which he is born. Every higher essence above me, be it God, be it man, weakens the feeling of my uniqueness, and pales only before the sun of this consciousness. If I concern myself for myself, the unique one, then my concern rests on its transitory, mortal creator, who consumes himself, and I may say; all things are nothing to me.<sup>63</sup>

Kierkegaard, although he was vehemently opposed to certain of Max Stirner's ideas,<sup>64</sup> since Stirner totally rejected the idea of the individual as a 'vessel of God',<sup>65</sup> would have agreed with Stirner's basic tenet. Kierkegaard treated the individual as the ultimate category.<sup>66</sup> Kierkegaard like Stirner, worked out in detail the meaning of der Einzige (hiin Enkelte). However, such a stand eliminates any possibility of the relation between the self and the other being the ultimate category. A person, therefore, has "no essential relation

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61. Chatterton-Hill, George, The Philosophy of Nietzsche (London: John Ouseley Limited, 1912(?)) pp.240-241

62. Ibid

63. Stirner, Max (psued.) (Johann Casper Schmidt), The Ego and His Own: The Case of the Individual Against Authority (New York: Libertarian Book Club, 1963) trans S.T. Byington, p.366

64. SS p.192

65. Stirner, op. cit., p.365

66. MacIntyre, Alasdair (Alexander Chalmers) A Short History of Ethics (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967) p.217



except to himself".<sup>67</sup> It would seem that such an outlook would be rejected out of hand by Buber. In fact Buber gives it a sympathetic hearing since he rejects the collective ideal, which only represents for him an attempt to escape the loneliness of each individual by becoming immersed in a group. However, one cannot overcome man's isolation so simply.<sup>68</sup> There is a disagreement between Buber and Kierkegaard about the extent to which one must reject the collective idea, i.e. 'the crowd'. Kierkegaard held that a crowd is 'untruth'.<sup>69</sup> Kierkegaard held that 'the single one' should be "chary about having to do with 'the others', and essentially should talk only with God and with himself -- for only one attains the goal".<sup>70</sup> Kierkegaard believed that only the individual receives the truth.<sup>71</sup> The truth depends upon autonomy which is dismissed by the collective ideal and conception of man. Macmurray in sidestepping the concept of uniqueness and by laying stress upon only the relational aspect of the self does not adequately combat the dangers of the collective conception of man. It must be recognised that Macmurray is referring to the assumption that the self is dependent upon the Other for existence. However, such a bald statement does not adequately take into account the solitary self which is connected with the relational or social aspect of the self. Macmurray's denial of the existence of the solitary self except as something that exists only as a theoretical standpoint,<sup>72</sup> overlooks the numbing and overpowering isolation that one feels even when one is immersed in a group. Macmurray has overlooked the solitary nature of

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67. BMM p.41

68. SS p.191

69. Kierkegaard, Søren A. The Point of View (London: Oxford University Press, 1939) trans. Walter Lowrie, p.112

70. Ibid p.113

71. Ibid p.119

72. SA p.142

man's communion with God, something that Kierkegaard emphasised. The concept of der Einzige is of importance, since it points to the uniqueness of ultimately entering into a complete relationship and communion with God. Macmurray has failed to recognise the dangers of the collective nature of the group, although he did not advocate the collective; he failed to counter the numbing assertion of the group or even the other over the 'I'. Macmurray did not, moreover, sufficiently deal with the feelings, problems and the actuality of the isolation of the individual.

Macmurray failed to adequately take into account that even though one is permeated by the relational<sup>a</sup> and social; one is also isolated as a singular individual irrespective of one's relational connections. By depending upon the concept of reciprocity within a relationship to define the self, Macmurray ignored the necessary presupposition of the unique individual and thereby threatened to reduce the self to a product of action and reaction. Macmurray considered the idea of resistance to be important in his explanation of the self in terms of the other. "The possibility of action depends upon the Other being also agent, and so upon a plurality of agents in one field of action. The resistance of the Self through which the Self can exist as agent must be the resistance of another self."<sup>73</sup> This, however, threatens to reduce the universe to "an interlocking mechanism in which change, novelty, and creation have no place."<sup>74</sup> Carr in The Unique Status of Man pointed out that such a reduction of things to action and reaction are found among the behaviourists in psychology (e.g. Mead) and among the determinists and naturalists

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73. SA p. 145

74. Carr, Herbert W., The Unique Status of Man (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1928) p.191

(a) see footnote 64 p. 243

in ethics.<sup>75</sup> If the self is only considered in terms of resistance one threatens the freedom of the individual, which together with equality is a foundation stone in Macmurray's conception of the community. By confining the concept of the self to the communal alone one threatens the concept of the communal, as well as introducing a certain degree of ambiguity, not to say inconsistency, into one's conception of the self. The self must be more than the resistance to the other; it must be more than a product of communal, i.e. mutual and reciprocal, relationships.

The conception of the self which is confined to the relational aspect of man's nature favours the concept of the antecedent society. In fact Macmurray defined the self exclusively in terms of the community and limited too closely his understanding of the self to the relational aspect of human nature, thereby undermining the uniqueness of the individual. Although Macmurray's understanding of the self as relational is of great value, the limitations imposed by a purely communal approach to the self misrepresents human nature. Buber, unlike Mead, was ambivalent about the question of whether or not one should presuppose an antecedent self or an antecedent society. Mead believed that self was a 'bio-social emergent', i.e. something that requires the relational to become a self. Buber, on the other hand, maintained that the self only comes into existence when it enters into communication, but still presupposed a Kantian transcendental 'subject' as a prior condition of relations which lends support to moral and religious concerns. Buber admitted that to claim that the community came first would be a matter of pure speculation.<sup>76</sup>

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75. Car, op. cit., p.192

76. SS pp.251-252

The Christian tradition tends to picture the individual as alone when facing God. Nevertheless, each individual is judged in terms of relations each man had with his fellow beings as well as with God. This combination of the solitary and inter-relational aspects of man is illustrated by the passage from Matthew Chapter 25, which tells of the coming final judgement. The Son of Man divides the individuals into two groups according to their relations to other men. However, each man is judged. The Gospels not only deal with the relational aspect of man as in Christ's command to love your neighbour as yourself, but they also offer a view of the isolation of each man from other men, which is starkly illustrated by Jesus' solitary prayers on the Mount of Olives in Luke Chapter 22.

The relational approach to the human self is enlightening, yet without a firm basis for an autonomous, singular and solitary aspect of the self; it only provides an incomplete representation of the self. Can one justifiably presuppose a self that is an antecedent to the encounter of the self and the other, i.e. the nascent community? Is there some a priori aspect of the self that has been overlooked?

John Baillie in Our Knowledge of God assumed that something exists before the first encounter with the other.

Our knowledge of other minds is not merely a derivative from our knowledge of other bodies or of our minds or of both together, but is itself a primary and original mode of consciousness of equal right with these others and having lived them, a character of sui generis. Expressing it in Kantian language, we may say that the conception of society is not a posteriori but an a priori conception. It need hardly be said that this logical priority does not imply the chronological priority of the conception of society to actual social experience, still less anything that could be called 'innateness'. We cannot possess the conception of otherness prior to our first encounter

with another yet that conception is not inductively derived from the encounter, but is called into being on the occasion of it and constitutes to it the very character which would be required as the basis of such an induction; just as the conception of tridimensional space, though it could not be present in my mind prior to my first encounter, but is given with it as the necessary condition of its taking place — that is as the necessary condition of my apprehending the body's solidity.<sup>77</sup>

John Baillie posited the existence of something or at least the potential for something before the first encounter with another that is a precursor to the relational. Buber also suggested the presence of a Kantian transcendental 'subject' that is a precursor to relationships.<sup>78</sup> Niebuhr also posited something before the encounter of the 'I' and the other.

x Human individuality, being a product of spirit as well as of nature, is subject to development. Primitive man is inserted with comparative frictionless harmony into the 'primeval we' of group life. He emerges from this group consciousness only gradually as an individual. But what emerges is an original endowment, present from the beginning. The uniqueness of this special endowment is proved not only by the fact that it develops in human life only, but by the character of primitive existence.<sup>79</sup>

Niebuhr presupposed not only the presence of an 'original endowment' but was also cognizant of the importance of such an a priori assumption to the uniqueness of the individual. The a priori conception of otherness before the initial encounter as seen by Baillie, as well as the clear assertion of Niebuhr of an 'original endowment' leads to the possibility of both men allowing for the possibility of an antecedent self. One must immediately ask what is the 'original endowment'? In his discussion of the self as subject D.D. Raphael was quick to point out that the self as subject was not part of the world

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77. Baillie, John, Our Knowledge of God (London: Oxford University Press, 1939) p.312

78. SS p.251

79. Niebuhr, Reinhold, The Nature and Destiny of Man, Volume I Human Nature (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941) p.56



that the self knows, which must also apply to the antecedent self. However, there might be an indication of what is at least on the material plane a manifestation of the 'original endowment'. Noam Chomsky in his discussion in "Problems of Knowledge and Freedom" surmised that a system of knowledge and beliefs "results from the interplay of innate mechanisms, genetically determined maturational processes, and interaction with the social and physical environment".<sup>80</sup> Chomsky also advanced the premise that language results from a similar interplay of "initially given structure of the mind, maturational processes and interaction with the environment".<sup>81</sup> Language is a particular and fundamental part of human knowledge for Chomsky. The conception of the self which was favoured by Macmurray seems to include not only the interaction with the environment specifically the other, but also includes certain maturational aspects such as those outlined in his understanding of the development of the self in his discussion of the mother-child relationship. However, Chomsky included a third component that comes into play in language and other forms of human knowledge which is the "given structure of the mind", which may be the physical manifestation of the 'original endowment'. Language may well be dependent upon not only the social and maturational components but also upon an initially given structure of the mind which is affected by biological and other such factors, and this may also be applied to the concept of the self. The "given structure of the mind" is the pre-programmed structure of the brain. This initial pre-programming of each mind hints at the intrinsic unique self of each individual.

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80. Chomsky, Noam, Language and Mind (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968) p.25

81. Ibid p.25



C. A. Campbell in his differentiation of the self and the person also sheds light upon the conception of the antecedent self.

Campbell stated that:

The view to which we are being led, then, is that self-identity is a much wider conception than personal identity. But though 'self' and 'person' must be quite sharply distinguished, it is vital to bear in mind that they do not designate two different beings. They designate one and the same ontological entity in two different aspects. The self may function when the person does not, but the person cannot function when the self does not. The person is the self, qua functioning in terms of its definitive and normal character. Indeed the person, so far from being an entity different from the self, may be said to be something which the self gradually tends to become. The self starts upon its career with a variety of native instincts, impulses and capacities closely dependent upon its association with a particular animal body. Through the self's actions upon and reactions to its physical and social environment on basis of these given propensities and powers, the relatively stable system of dispositions we call its 'character' is gradually built up, and the self grows into what we call a 'person'.<sup>82</sup>

Campbell understood that the child becomes a person, but always was an antecedent self.<sup>83</sup> The self becomes a person.<sup>84</sup> Campbell arguing for the distinction between personal identity and self-identity pointed out that psychotherapy in the case of multiple personalities aims at the restoration of an integrated personality by breaking down the barriers that have subconsciously been erected to separate the two detached groups with the mind which are two personalities not two selves. Campbell averred that: "The successful therapy seems to presuppose that the 'two persons' are different manifestations of a single entity, the 'one self'."<sup>85</sup> The self for Campbell differs from the self of Macmurray since Macmurray's self comes only through the

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82. Ibid pp.88-89

83. Ibid p.86

84. Ibid p.89

85. Ibid p.92

maturation process of reciprocal relations and other personal experiences which has no place for the antecedent self or even Niebuhr's 'original endowment'. Campbell maintained that: "self-identity is a much wider conception than that of personal identity. The 'person' is the self only in so far as the latter manifests itself in general accord with the relatively stable set of dispositions which it acquires in the course of its experience and which constitutes what is commonly called 'character'".<sup>86</sup> Macmurray's view of the self is equivalent to the 'person' in Campbell's terminology, which limits the self to the relational and personal experience while not allowing the possibility of the anchor of the antecedent self.

The main objection to Macmurray's dependence upon a solely relational and experiential model of the self centering upon the communal comes from the possibility of such a stand weakening the conception of the intrinsic uniqueness of the self. The relational 'self-other' is a necessary part of the process of maturation and self-knowledge, but the totality of the self cannot be confined to the social and communal aspects even though these permeate the whole self. However, this is not an attempt to reassert a transcendental self, but the recognition of the pre-programmed and a priori constituent of the self from which each intrinsically unique self originates and continues to become. However, the intrinsic uniqueness of the self is threatened by Macmurray's emphasis upon the communal nature of the self without the recognition of a unique and a priori antecedent self, even though Macmurray denied the possibility of two selves being identical.<sup>87</sup>

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86. Ibid p.93

87. PR pp.19, 24

The danger is that one might easily reduce individuality to an incidental element which is to be found only in the 'lower' life of the body.<sup>88</sup> The self is not something that can be reduced to something that is inserted into the body or mind. The self is not inserted into the mind by originating only from one's initial relation with one's 'mother' in Macmurray's terminology. Admittedly, as Macmurray recognised, man is imprisoned by circumstances and is a product at least partially, of those circumstances and in particular those of community. Nevertheless, "the self is the spring of life by which the individual is given its specific character as a human being",<sup>89</sup> i.e. its unique individuality. The subject self becomes the later basis for the self as object, and it provides the a priori, intrinsic uniqueness that is part of each person even before one encounters the other.

Although the relational aspect of the self is an important constituent of the self, one cannot overlook the presence of the 'original endowment'. Macmurray's rejection of the solitary self must lead to the assumption that Macmurray rejected the concept of der Einzige and the reality of the isolation of the self from the other. Macmurray's rejection of the antecedent self and der Einzige brings closer the dangers of the collective idea of human relations or at the very least Macmurray failed to temper the collective outlook, which makes individuality incidental. Macmurray by reducing the self to its communal elements has threatened the singular, autonomous and intrinsically unique aspects of man that are to be found in every individual.

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88. Piper, Otto A., Christian Ethics (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1970) p.53

89. Ibid p.54

CHAPTER 11

A Critique of the Communal  
View of Religion

Macmurray's explanation of the self centres upon the community and the personal elements that constitute community, i.e. the external relation of the self and the other. Macmurray's explanation of the self, while sufficient in terms of the maturational processes of the self, has overlooked the concept of the antecedent self, thereby endangering the concept of the individual as an intrinsically unique being. Macmurray did not only look to the community for his basic explanation of the self, but he also looked to the community for his basic explanation of religion. Macmurray posited that religion was to be best understood in terms of community. There is a close connection between Macmurray's conception of the self and his conception of religion. "The religious activity of the self is its effort to enter into communion with the Other."<sup>1</sup> The connection being the focus upon the relation with the Other in community. Macquarrie in his summary of Macmurray's position also notes this connection: "It is in the consideration of the community of personal selves that he states his view of the function of religion, already foreshadowed in the idea of the world as one action." Macquarrie also notes that religion for Macmurray "celebrates and expresses the unity of persons in fellowship, and this in turn is possible only in a world informed by the unifying intention of God as the supreme agent."<sup>2</sup> Macmurray understood religion to be communal although this activity was motivated by God, which is in opposition to Kierkegaard's point of view that Man stands in relation to God and "should be chary about having to do with 'the others', and essentially should talk only with God ...".<sup>3</sup> Macmurray in general

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1. SRE p.47

2. Macquarrie, John, Twentieth-Century Religious Thought (London: Press, Ltd., 1963) p.207, hereafter cited as TCR

3. Kierkegaard, Søren A. The Point of View (London: Oxford University Press, 1939) p.113, hereafter cited as PV

held the view that "religious experience occurs in a situation where each person becomes closely identified with the other members of the group".<sup>4</sup> Although Macmurray did recognise the place of God in his explanation of religion, he concentrated his analysis of religion upon this external relational or communal side. Macmurray advanced an anthropological or at the very least an empirical view of religion which only in passing combines with the overall motivating force of God. In making religion essentially a group or communal activity did Macmurray overlook or underestimate certain other features necessary for religion?

Macmurray's definition of religion revolved around his concept of community just as his definition of the self revolved around his conception of community. Macmurray asserted that: "For at the heart of religion there lies an activity of communion or fellowship. Unless we have persons in relation there is no fellowship; for whatever else fellowship entails it entails a union of togetherness of separate individuals."<sup>5</sup> Macmurray not only considers religion to be relational,<sup>a</sup> but he strongly dismisses the possibility of religion being something for the autonomous individual, with his denial that any type of contemplation can be considered as religious since this "is a withdrawal from fellowship, and so from the experience which constitutes the central point of religious experience".<sup>6</sup> Macmurray's basic hypothesis is that: "religion is about community".<sup>7</sup> Another variation of this hypothesis is that: "religion is the celebration of communion".<sup>8</sup> In Macmurray's general analysis of religion,

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4. Desmonde, William H. "Mead, George Herbert" Encyclopedia of Philosophy (London: Collier-Macmillan Limited, 1967) p.232

5. RAS p.47

6. Ibid

7. PR p.159

8. PR p.162

(a) see footnote 64 p. 243



there are four general facts that are applicable to all religions; all four contain direct references to the social and/or communal nature of religion.<sup>9</sup> Since Macmurray's understanding of religion centres around the concept of community which itself centres around reciprocal relations, it is not surprising to find religion spoken of only, or primarily in terms of personal relations. Macmurray averred that: "Religion is what a man makes of his personal relationships."<sup>10</sup> Macmurray although cognizant of God's function in religion understood religion in communal terms, and reduced the field of religion to the field of human relationships.<sup>11</sup>

Since Macmurray's analysis of religion is basically communal, the close connection between community and religion suggests an affinity with the ideas of Emile Durkheim and Georg Simmel. George Simmel posited that a group has the tendency "to assume the form of the transcendental and to equip itself with religious emotional values which might be caused by the fact that this synthesis of individuals into a higher form of group unity must only too often seem like a miracle to the more or less lucid consciousness of the individual."<sup>12</sup> However, Macmurray did not merely assume that religion was primarily a product of the transcendent unity of community. Durkheim assumed that the essence of religion was a social phenomenon, which contained the premise that religion had as its object the worship of society itself.<sup>13</sup> Durkheim's assumption that society is central to any interpretation of religion does have some connection with Macmurray's approach to religion. Durkheim presupposed that society

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9. PR pp.156-157

10. RE p.225

11. IU p.135

12. Simmel, George, Sociology of Religion (New York: Philosophical Library Inc., 1959) trans. by Roesenthal, Curt, p.71

13. Phillips, Dew Z. Religion without Explanation (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1976) pp.90-91, hereafter cited as RWE

is not just the sum of individuals, but a peculiar entity.<sup>14</sup> One of Durkheim's primary assumptions concerns the notion of a totem, i.e. something that symbolised the community. Durkheim noted that:

But we know that the centre of the cult is actually elsewhere. It is the figurative representation of this plant or animal and the totemic emblems and symbols of every sort, which have the greatest sanctity; so it is in them that is found the source of that religious nature, of which the real objects represented by these emblems receive only a reflection.

Thus the totem is before all a symbol, a material expression of something else. But of what? From the analysis to which we have been giving our attention, it is evident that it expresses and symbolises two different sorts of things. In the first place, it is the outward and visible form of what we have called the totemic principle or God. But it is also the symbol of the determined society called the clan.<sup>15</sup>

Totemism in terms of primitive religion is understood as a social phenomenon intertwined with religion. Totemism for Durkheim was a fundamental element in the primitive form of religion. Durkheim in his search for the essence of religion also believed that there was something eternal in religion from which society must affirm itself. In fact, according to Durkheim, society and religion are so closely interwoven that religion and society should be regarded as the matrix out of which other human activities, including science, have grown;<sup>16</sup> a view that is reminiscent of Macmurray's assumption that the religious mode of apperception is primary. Durkheim saw the ideas of religion and society to be essentially the same. Unquestionably Durkheim considered religion to be a social phenomenon with society as the controlling force behind the individual. "But from the moment when it is recognised that above the individual there is society, and that this is not a nominal being created by reason,

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14. TCR p.156

15. Durkheim, Emile, The Elementary Forms of Religious Life (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1976), trans. by Swain, Joseph W., pp.205-206

16. TCR pp.156-157

but a system of active forces, a new manner of explaining men, becomes possible."<sup>17</sup>

Macmurray paralleled Durkheim's approach to religion in two important ways. Durkheim emphasised the connection between the symbolic affirmation of community and religion. Durkheim in his explanation of cult noted that:

This is because society cannot make its influence felt unless it is in action, and it is not in action unless the individuals who compose it are assembled together and act in common. It is by common action that it takes consciousness of itself and realises its position; it is before all else an active co-operation. The collective ideas and sentiments are even possible only owing to these exterior movements which symbolise them, as we have established. Then it is action which dominates the religious life, because of the mere fact that it is society which is its source.<sup>18</sup>

Durkheim concluded that the external activity of the group, i.e. the symbolic activity of the ritual, is the dominating force in religion.

Macmurray also postulated the central importance of religious activity for community. Macmurray maintained that religion "is the reflective activity which expresses the consciousness of community..."<sup>19</sup>

The communal activity of the ritual was central to Macmurray's understanding of religion. Macmurray asserted that:

The members of a primitive community do in fact like a common life; but they also perform in common certain ritual activities which express their consciousness that they live a common life and their joy in the knowledge. This celebration of their fellowship is their religious activity; and since it symbolises or expresses their common consciousness of the community life, such activity is an activity of reflection.<sup>20</sup>

Reflective activity for Macmurray is symbolic and refers beyond itself.

Macmurray closely coupled religious activity and communal celebration.

Macmurray did not consider this to be the totality of religion, but he

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17. EFRL p.447

18. EFRL p.418

19. PR p.162

20. PR p.162

assigned to religious activity a central role in the community. "Religious ceremonial, therefore, is never merely an expression of the consciousness of communion, it is also a means for sustaining it. It expresses at once the sense of community and the fear of its failure; and in so doing it strengthens and sustains the unity that it expresses."<sup>21</sup> Durkheim's assumption that the totem, which is the symbol that is found within primitive religion, dominates religious activity, is shared by Macmurray. Macmurray assumed that: "Religious reflection in its primary and central expression, has the form of symbolic action, and this action is itself communal. It is as part of the common life of a group of persons and an expression or symbol of the common life as a whole. To put it otherwise, it has the form of ritual or ceremonial activity and this activity is itself the primary religious reflection."<sup>22</sup> Macmurray also pointed out that: "Primitive religion is tribal, and its ceremonial is an expression of the tribe as the unity of its members. The religious ceremonial expresses the time-unity of the persons who compose it, both the living and the dead and the yet unborn."<sup>23</sup>

The totemic principle, i.e. the symbol of community is for Durkheim something that symbolises two different things; one is God and the other is the clan. Macmurray also assumed that there is a connection between the community and God, who is called the universal, personal Other. Macmurray identifies the author of the world with the personal author of the community.<sup>24</sup>

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21. SRE pp.67-68

22. RAS p.55

23. CS p.32

24. PR p.165

The second area of affinity between the outlooks of Macmurray and Durkheim centres around the assumed interdependence of religion and society (or community in Macmurray's terminology). Durkheim's basic assumption is that religion is the worship of society.<sup>25</sup> Durkheim asserted that: "If religion has given birth to all that is essentially society, it is because the idea of society is the soul of religion."<sup>26</sup> Durkheim also stated that: "religious force is nothing other than the collective and anonymous force of the clan..."<sup>27</sup> Macmurray assumed that primitive religion "centres in those corporate acts in which its members celebrate their fellowship in the common life".<sup>28</sup> Macmurray maintained quite simply that: "all religion is the expression of community".<sup>29</sup> Durkheim simply considered the essence of religion to be social. Macmurray in his search for an empirical base has selected the communal aspect of religion and used it as the fundamental material from which an understanding of religion may be obtained. God for Macmurray threatens to be reduced to the symbol that is necessary for community.<sup>30</sup> The basic aspect of community that constitutes the empirical base for religion for Macmurray is the mutuality of personal relationships,<sup>31</sup> therefore God is defined as the Universal personal Other.

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25. RWE p.90

26. EFRL p.419

27. EFRL p.221

28. RAS p.60

29. CS p.32

30. Kirkpatrick, Frank Gloyd, "The Idea of God in the Thought of John Macmurray: Its Basis and Some Implications" (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: Brown University, 1970) p.141

31. Thomason, William Paul, "The Empirical Basis for Religion in John Macmurray's Philosophy" (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1972) p.189



Macmurray was somewhat ambiguous about the dependence of the community upon religion and religion's dependence upon the community. However, Macmurray did not posit the presence of an antecedent society in his discussions as did Durkheim, but seems to have favoured a 'twin-born' approach. One must always keep in mind that Macmurray was reacting against the communist/Marxist presupposition that religion is an ideal; by advancing the premise that religion is real when expressed in terms of community.<sup>32</sup>

However, Macmurray relied upon a relationally oriented approach to describe religion. Moreover, it has been suggested that Durkheim is basically a relationalist in approach,<sup>33</sup> which suggests a further fundamental affinity between Macmurray and Durkheim.

Simone Weil in a general appraisal of the whole French School of Sociology remarked that: "The French School of sociology is very right in its social explanation of religion. It only fails to explain one infinitely small thing; but this infinitely small thing is the grain of mustard seed, the buried pearl, the leaven, the salt. The infinitely small thing is God; it is infinitely more than everything."<sup>34</sup> Macmurray seems at times to overlook the overriding and infinitely important and central place of God when discussing religion. Macmurray on one occasion leaves God out of the formula and asked his readers to think of religion as a human activity.<sup>35</sup> After removing God "for the moment" Macmurray opined that: "Religion, therefore, is reason in human nature, creating the community of persons — recognising and achieving the unity of all personal life."<sup>36</sup> Although Macmurray did

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32. CS p.35

33. Stark, Werner, The Fundamental Forms of Social Thought (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962) pp.237-238

34. Weil, Simone, Selected Essays 1934-43 (London: Oxford University Press, 1962) trans and chosen by Rees, Richard, p.215

35. RE p.62

36. Ibid



not reduce God to a mere totem as did Durkheim, he did find it useful to reflect upon religion as a purely social phenomenon. It must be recognised that there is a distinct danger in over-stressing the social, while straying from the theocentric view of religion in favour of the heterocentric or anthropocentric; since it threatens to reduce religion to an institution, just another element or part of the social group, merely a method of examining human relations.

One criticism of Durkheim which is also applicable to Macmurray is that of D.Z. Phillips in Religion Without Explanation: "Durkheim, where religion is concerned, seems to want to explain a social movement by reference to the notion of society."<sup>37</sup> Durkheim wanted to argue that the ideas that people share in society including the ideas and beliefs about religion can be explained in terms of social bonds that they create.<sup>38</sup> The function of all beliefs for Durkheim is to express and make possible an experience of social solidarity.<sup>39</sup> The reductionist approach of Durkheim has certain inherent problems in that the expression of social solidarity is created and maintained by religion, but at the same time religion is a social movement. One is presented with a problem of logical priority. One cannot reduce religion to community as Durkheim did and tautologically maintain at that same time that community is a product of religion. Macmurray came close to repeating Durkheim's logical fallacy which is illustrated by Macmurray's assertion that religion is the expression of community taken together with his definition of the unity of community in terms of religion. One cannot reduce religion merely to a social phenomenon while believing that society is a product of religion.

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37. RWE p.90

38. RWE p.92

39. RWE p.94

The social explanation of religion is unbalanced, since it only considers one aspect of religion. Ginsberg noted in his article "Durkheim's Theory of Religion" that such a one-sided analysis of even primitive religion is invalid.

From a psychological point of view it is very doubtful whether even primitive religious experience can be said to have no other content than society. It is surely unlikely that men can ever be completely indifferent to the dangers and benefits of the natural environment which is the condition not only of their own lives but of the group of which they are members. No doubt primitive man was not interested in abstract speculations about the mysteries of the universe. But he needed something to cast out fears, allay bewilderment and solve perplexities and this in various ways religion supplied. Thus the religious consciousness, even in its elementary forms, must have included something more than the feeling of group solidarity.<sup>40</sup>

One cannot reduce religion to an instrument that brings about group solidarity or group unity. Macmurray, although not specifically attempting to limit the field of religion to group solidarity, overlooks, by not striking a balance between the communal and autonomous aspects of religion, the guiding force of religion to the solitary individual when faced with the facts of his environment beyond the community. Macmurray by depending upon a communal explanation of religion with its emphasis upon mutuality has produced an uneven explanation of religion, which has the tendency to consider only the empirical, outward elements while ignoring the solitary aspects of religion. Macmurray's hypothesis that the field of religion is personal experience is vague when taken together with his limiting assumption that the focal point of personal experience is mutual relationships, i.e. community. C.C.J. Webb suggested that the social

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40. Ginsberg, Morris, "Durkheim's Theory of Religion" in Essays in Sociology and Social Philosophy Volume I (Melbourne: William Heinemann Ltd., 1956) p.239

experience although similar may be two different sensations.<sup>41</sup> One only obscures the issue, however, by presupposing such a bifurcation, since as Macmurray rightly pointed out religion can be understood at least in part in terms of group activity. Nevertheless, one should be well aware that religion is more than just a part of a matrix of religion and society.

One danger of the communal approach is that God becomes a by-product of the matrix of society and religion. Another is that religion when defined in terms of personal relations becomes limited to only a public concern in which the individual has little part. Webb pointed out that: "A 'group theory' of religion, which ascribes or tends to ascribe a genuinely objective reality on to what the individual experiences when influenced by the 'collective representations' which he possesses as a member of a group -- such a group religion is unable to account for individual religion and must in the end see it as an illusion."<sup>42</sup> Macmurray considered individualism to lead to a rejection of religion in complete disagreement with Webb. "The opposite attitude, which is the core of real atheism, expresses itself in that individualism which makes a man feel alone and isolated in a world against which he must defend himself."<sup>43</sup>

Allport directly contradicts Macmurray's thesis that religion by definition is basically mutual. Allport concluded that: "Yet the focusing of a religious intention through prayer does not invariably require this sense of mutuality. In at least two great religious systems, both derivatives of ancient Hinduism, no assumption is made that any supernatural powers are affected by worship

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41. Webb, Clement Charles Julian, Group Theories of Religion and the Individual (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1916) p.14

42. Ibid pp.179-180

43. CS p.21

or supplication...".<sup>44</sup> Allport in fact diametrically opposes Macmurray's hypothesis by placing the solitary aspect of religion before the social component, although Allport certainly does not deny the communality of religion. "For the great majority of people the solitariness of the religious quest becomes a burden. They long to fuse their religious insight with those of their fellows under a common set of symbols. Indeed in many cases they first learned these insights in the company of their fellows."<sup>45</sup> Individual belief, however, is a presupposition of religion with religion a presupposition of community. Allport then pointed out that from this fusion of individual beliefs in community there develops ritual and dogma. Ritual serves to intensify the comparable attitudes and sentiments of all individuals that participate, as well as improving and socialising the inadequate intellectual formulations of the individual. The social constituent of religion in Allport's view only strengthens and builds upon the individual religious quest. However, there is always present the fact that deep inside, the individual may likewise know that the meaning he derives from the dogma is not identical for him and for all believers.<sup>46</sup> Allport follows in the footsteps of Whitehead who also considered religion to be primarily solitary. Not surprisingly Macmurray dismissed Whitehead's solitary view of religion.

By recognising both the solitary constituent of religion and that religion is part of the social matrix, Allport has gained a great deal more flexibility in his overall perception of religion. Religion as Macmurray believed is to do with mutuality, but it is not confined to mutuality, i.e. community. The attraction of the communality of religion is that it can be empirically validated, but

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44. Allport, Gordon W. , The Individual and His Religion (London: Constable Publishers, 1951) p. 149

45. Ibid p. 151

46. Ibid

this empirical validation is limited to the interaction of society with religion. Religion does not, nor should it, simply become the function or product of mutuality; thus making it the offspring of the community and reducing it to a public concern. One should realise that mutuality is only one of the areas in which religious experience manifests itself. Macmurray's understanding of the connection between mutuality and religion is extremely enlightening, but his rejection out of hand of the solitary elements in each man's religious quest is rather reactionary, although it naturally follows from his rejection of the autonomous aspect of the self. One cannot appreciate the full import of religion if one fails to recognise the importance of the autonomous, solitary religious quest.

Macmurray's rejection of the individual as the primary source of religious experience and his rejection of the Whiteheadian thesis about religion is total. Macmurray stated that:

The individualist tends naturally to think of religion as a private and individual matter, as an idiosyncrasy of peculiar people which concerns themselves alone. This merely reflects his own abnormal state of mind. The truth is precisely the opposite. Religion is the primary manifestation of the social character of human nature, and it is concerned with society, not with the individual.<sup>47</sup>

Macmurray dismissed the idea of a person as an isolated individual standing before Christ. Macmurray was cognizant of individualism only in terms of a reaction against the social nature of religion.

Clearly, then, the notion that religion is 'an individual matter' concerned with the 'salvation of the individual soul' is an abstraction; produced, we may guess, by the desire to extrude religion from the social field. We need not elaborate this point further; we shall take it for granted in what is to follow. Religion is not individual but social. It is not about the individual but about society. Its concern with the individual is with his relations to other persons and so with his sociality. Unless this is recognised there is no hope of understanding either religion or society.<sup>48</sup>

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47. Macmurray, John, A Challenge to the Churches: Religion and Democracy (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd., 1941) p.17 hereafter cited as CC

48. CS P. 21



Macmurray limited his understanding of religion to the social aspects and completely rejected the conception of religion as a solitary quest. It must be noted in passing that the terms social in this context centres around the common life, which is understood only in terms of the 'I-Thou'. The twofold use of society has already been noted and in this case leads to a certain degree of ambiguity, since Macmurray uses the term both in reference to the entirety of human groups and to a particular impersonal type of group. Macmurray in this context is referring to the totality of human grouping.

In the light of Macmurray's rejection of the individualistic notion of religion, his opposition to Whitehead's approach to religion is not surprising. Macmurray noted that: "When Professor Whitehead says that religion is what a man does with his solitariness he is saying what is almost the reverse of the truth; although he is, unlike many philosophers, moving in the right universe of discourse."<sup>49</sup> Whitehead's assertion is that: "Religion is what the individual does with his solitariness."<sup>50</sup> Macmurray, however, mistakenly insisted upon contrasting the individual with the 'corporate', i.e. communal, conception of religion. Macmurray opined that:

This dictum expresses a modern tendency to emphasise the individual aspect at the expense of the corporate; a tendency which flows from and strengthens the individualism of much of our Western outlook. But individualism, like the idealism which tends to accompany and complete it, is finally incompatible with religion, if only because it is incompatible with the inherent relatedness of personal life. The individual phase of personal relation, the necessary withdrawal into the self and so, into solitariness, refers to the return to the community and is for the sake of that return. Its religious aspect must always have relation to corporate religion if it is to function religiously. In formal terms, a relation to God which is

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49. RE p.225

50. Whitehead, Alfred North, Religion in the Making (Cambridge: University Press, 1926) p.16, hereafter cited as RM



not a relation to my neighbour is unreal. The withdrawal of the individual into religious solitude, into prayer and meditation, into self-examination and self-dedication, is an affirmation of his personal dependence, not an escape from it.<sup>51</sup>

The whole premise is impaired and permeated by Macmurray's insistence that the social is pre-eminent, i.e. the community comes before all else, in all religious questions. Macmurray failed to realise that man's relationship with God can overcome man's basic isolation, since any relation with another human being must have an element of mutual exclusion, whereas the element of mutual exclusion is not a necessary part of one's relationship with God. Also, one does not represent reality adequately, if one is not aware of the isolated struggle each man has within himself which affects his relation with God as much as his relations with man. Macmurray failed to recognise the importance of religious solitude and the autonomous, singular religious quest which will not fit into any set of presuppositions that are primarily relational.

Whitehead's thesis, that religion is what a man does with his solitude, forces the communality of religion into a subordinate position. This, Macmurray admitted, is a reversal of his approach to religion. Whitehead maintained that: "In the long run your character and your conduct of life depends upon your intimate convictions." He also maintained that: "Religion is the art and theory of the internal life of man, so far as it depends on the man and himself and on what is permanent in the nature of things."<sup>52</sup> Whitehead did not overlook the social component of religion. "Social facts are of

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51. RAS p. 69

52. RM pp. 15-16

great importance to religion, because there is no such thing as absolutely independent existence." However, Whitehead observed: "That all collective emotions leave untouched the awful ultimate fact, which is the human being consciously alone with itself, for its own sake."<sup>53</sup> Whitehead in a complete transposition of Macmurray's premise made the communality of religion a by-product of the solitary religious struggle. "Collective enthusiasms, revivals, institutions, churches, rituals, bibles, codes of behaviour, are the trappings of religion, its passing form. They may be useful, or harmful; they may be authoritatively ordained, or merely temporary expedients. But the end of religions is beyond all this."<sup>54</sup> William James also tended towards a solitary or autonomous view of religion. James asserted that: "Religion, therefore, as I now ask you arbitrarily to take it, shall mean for us the feelings, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider divine."<sup>55</sup> The concept of religion as a product of man's actual isolation does have merit; although it is as fallacious as a completely communal approach if it overlooks the dependence of man upon man as a continuous factor in human life.

Whitehead realised that religion was to a certain extent a social phenomenon and admitted that the "primitive phase of religion" was dominated by "ritual and emotion" which could be dealt with as essentially a social phenomenon.<sup>56</sup> Whitehead and Macmurray represent two sides of the same coin. If one realises that religion is deeply

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53. RM p.16

54. RM p.17

55. James, William, The Varieties of Religious Experience (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1908) p.31

56. RM p.23

interwoven in the fabric of human nature, one should not be surprised to find that it appears as a fundamental feature in both the social and solitary constituents of human life. Karl Rahner held that there were two basic lines of self fulfillment that are the essence of human nature. For Rahner man "is a being who turns back unto himself".<sup>57</sup> Rahner has pointed out that there is an advantage of the two balancing one another, i.e. the solitary and the inter-relational.<sup>a</sup> Rahner averred that:

Gathering and scattering, entry into oneself and going out of oneself, belong to each other essentially. And what constitutes a true human being and Christian is that he entrusts himself freely to both these basic movements, as both under the direction of one same God, and serene in this creaturely confidence, refrains from making either of them an absolute.<sup>58</sup>

The totality of human nature as understood in terms of being under and through the direction of God with God placed in the central position keeps both the social and autonomous from becoming absolute.

If one favours the theocentric approach to religion as opposed to the anthropocentric or heterocentric approach, one accepts that one faces God on at least two levels. A person faces God as an individual who is alone and faced with his own death unleavened by his relations with others and his responsibility for specific acts, but concurrently the person also faces God as one person that exists with and is to a large extent a dependent and responsible part of the relational matrix, i.e. one is dependent upon and responsible for one's communal and social context. One can easily admit that human nature as well as religion is a complex, intricate and interrelated expanse that cannot be simply explained. Although, Macmurray's insights are

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57. Rahner, Karl, Christian in the Market Place pp.90-91, cited in Bozzo, Edward George "Toward a Renewed Fundamental Theology: The Implications of the Thought of John Macmurray" (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: Catholic University of America, 1971) p.248

58. Ibid

(a) see footnote 64 p. 243

helpful, one cannot simply consider religion in primarily relational terms with the stress upon mutuality. Simmels and Durkheim's conception of religion both as a product of a group and the more appealing conception of the group as a product of religion<sup>59</sup> does not take into account the isolated and complex nature of man's religious experience, nor does Macmurray's basic understanding of religion as dependent upon community.

The theocentric analysis of religion insures that one does not at any time run the risk of reducing religion to a particular aspect of human nature or activity, which is the dangerous path Macmurray treads in his overriding concern to make the communal primary. Macmurray's abandonment of the concept of the solitary religious struggle erroneously sets aside the autonomous judgement of each individual to believe or not to believe. The leap of faith is not a product of one's relations with others, but a solitary, separate, private and individual decision to believe that must be made by the individual. Without the autonomous judgement of whether to believe or not to believe one cannot have faith.

Although Macmurray considered the field of religion to be the whole field of common experience;<sup>60</sup> his focus upon inter-personal relationships and the activity of mutuality<sup>61</sup> leads one to conclude that religion originates mainly from a relational,<sup>a</sup> i.e. communal field, of experience. Macmurray in fact threatens to reduce his conception of God to little more than our experience of one another, i.e. a matter of personal, reciprocal, and empirical experience.<sup>62</sup> This ignores the fact that one's relations with men do not even ideally remove the isolation and mutual exclusion present in human

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60. SRE p.47

61. SRE p.65

62. SA p.72

(a) see footnote 64 p.243

relations, but one's relation with God does ultimately overcome and offer an end to one's isolation. The basic problem for religion, according to Macmurray, is that of inter-personal relationships.<sup>63</sup> Such an emphasis threatens to reduce religion to something dependent upon human beings with no reference to God. Macmurray's conceptualisation of religion may lead one to conclude that the community is a separate entity that is ultimately the object of worship and God is nothing more than a label for this entity. Macmurray in concentrating upon the social aspect of religion has failed to realise the underlying importance of the solitary religious quest. By abandoning the solitary constituent of religion, one also abandons the individual's faith which underlies all worship. The individual must have faith, which comes for each man with the making of a choice whether or not to have faith in God. By abandoning the social constituent of religion one no longer has an empirical basis for religion threatening to let it drift into illusion. Only by assuming that religion is primarily theocentric can one avoid making religion a study of human nature alone, i.e. anthropocentric, which allows a component of human nature to dominate all other aspects of religion. Religion can be viewed both as a solitary and a communal or relational<sup>64</sup> activity, but in reality it contains elements of both, but this alone does not explain religion.

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63. SA p.73

64. Macmurray used the term 'relational' in a specific and limited way. The term 'relational' is interchangeable with such terms as 'inter-relational' and 'mutually relational'. The term 'relational' would not apply in this limited context to such things as plants, animals or other material objects outside the mutually relational scope. The term 'relational' can mean more than social, since it can include all relationships between men and also the relationship between man and God.

PART IV

An Examination of Macmurray's  
View of Ethics

CHAPTER 12

Introduction



The ultimate and primary area of interest for this study centres around Macmurray's theory of morality, and its connection with Macmurray's dependence upon the idea of community. Macmurray's method of philosophy is fundamentally dependent upon his conception of and use of the relational or communal orientation that permeates his thought. Consequently the focus will be upon the connection of Macmurray's understanding of ethics with his ideas about community and its concomitant elements of mutuality and personal relations with the other.

Macmurray's understanding of morality and/or ethics posited the existence of a choice between at least two courses of action which includes the assumption that there is a distinction between the two courses of action. The making of the choice implies means, motive and intention. There are two interrelated motifs in Macmurray's discussion of morality. The first of these two motifs has to do with the choice between two distinct courses of action. Action is a choice for Macmurray, which implies that the distinction between 'right' and 'wrong' is inherent in the nature of action.<sup>1</sup> The choice which is manifested in action is the realisation of intention. Macmurray assumed that: "to act is to realise intention, but it is also to enter into relation with the Other".<sup>2</sup>

The second motif revolves around the other which is an inherent property of action, i.e. that action inevitably involves relations to the other<sup>3</sup>, not only in terms of another as persons, but also in terms of the person as a tool. To act is to realise one's intention with

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1. Bozzo, Edward George, "Towards a Renewed Fundamental Moral Theology: The Implications of the Thought of John Macmurray for Christian Ethics" (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: Catholic University of America, 1969) p.190

2. PR p.113

3. Bozzo, op. cit., p.190

with the help of the other.<sup>4</sup> By its very nature action not only contains the choice and the necessary distinction, but also the intention which is carried out with the help of the other. Morality is not merely a matter of choice, or even choice with intention, but morality for Macmurray is intention as constituted by the mutuality of the Other, which by definition limits the other to another person, not to just another object. Morality assumes not only that there exists a choice through action, but also the intention to act with the Other. The concept of mutuality, which is basic to Macmurray's thought and the driving force behind his conception of community and personal relations, is also basic to his perception of morality. The heart of morality for Macmurray is not the choice between right and wrong. The essence of morality lies in the relationships of persons and the intention that forms action.<sup>5</sup> Macmurray introduced the idea that the epistemologically oriented procedure is an inadequate, negative or false form of morality, whereas the ontological approach to morality is adequate, positive or true.

#### Morality as a Matter of Intention

The first fundamental principle, that sheds light upon Macmurray's conception of morality, is his distinction between right and wrong, which is the process of valuation which is an inherent constituent of action. Macmurray wrote that: "Since action is choice, the distinction between 'right' and 'wrong' is inherent in the nature of action."<sup>6</sup> Macmurray noted that: "knowingly to actualise one of a

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4. PR p.113

5. Bozzo, op. cit., p.165

6. PR p.112

number of possibles, and in doing so to negate the others, is to characterise the act that is so performed as right and the others as wrong".<sup>7</sup> Right and wrong for Macmurray are primary distinctions, since they are a product of action, which is itself primary; whereas true-false distinctions are secondary, since they are a product of reflection.<sup>8</sup> Macmurray asserted that:

Action is primary and concrete, thought is secondary, abstract and derivative. This must mean that the distinction between 'right' and 'wrong', which is constitutive for action, is the primary standard of validity; while the distinction between 'true' and 'false' is secondary. In some sense, though not necessarily directly, it must be possible to distinguish between 'right' and 'wrong' before distinguishing between 'true' and 'false', and so without reference to the truth or falsity of a judgement, and to derive the latter from the former.<sup>9</sup>

However, the distinction between right and wrong is not a moral distinction, since the essential feature of personal inter-relatedness, which is found with the context of the community, is missing. There are two ways in which one might act rightly or wrongly which are not moral distinctions. These two forms of non-moral distinction between right and wrong, which is a return to Macmurray's two negative modes of apperception, are labelled by Macmurray as 'aesthetic' and 'technical'. Macmurray held that there are two modes of apperception of right and wrong that are non-moral. Macmurray asserted that there are "two ways in which action can be wrongly performed, either through a misapprehension of the Other -- by misunderstanding the situation, for instance -- or through the lack of skill in operation".<sup>10</sup>

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7. SA p.140

8. Jeffko, Walter George, "John Macmurray's Logical Form of the Personal: A Critical Exposition" (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: Fordham University, 1970) p.163

9. SA p.89

10. PR pp.113-114

Conversely, Macmurray assumed that:

Acting rightly, therefore, we may say, is either a matter of efficiency or a matter of style; and we may note that both criteria can be used in the valuation of action, and that which of the two standards is the subordinate one will depend on whether the end or the means is subordinate in the intentionality of the action.<sup>11</sup>

"Neither of these two modes of rightness is moral", since technical rightness is a matter of efficiency and aesthetic rightness is a matter of style,<sup>12</sup> i.e. neither art nor science offers a moral judgement. Although the rightness or wrongness of action is a constituent of a moral action and judgement, and is primarily a moral distinction,<sup>13</sup> in itself for Macmurray it does not constitute the determining factor in morality.

The second fundamental factor, which is inherent in action, is the realisation of intention,<sup>14</sup> and the motive that stimulates the action. The terms 'motive' and 'intention' are sometimes confused,<sup>15</sup> however, Macmurray clearly differentiated between the two terms. Macmurray traced the confusion between the two terms to the assumption that the theoretical is primary. Macmurray stated that:

The distinction between motive and intention is difficult, and indeed impossible, for any philosophy which accepts the primacy of the theoretical, and takes its stand upon the 'cogito'. For the motives of our actions are not thought, but felt; and if we represent them as thought, they become indistinguishable from intentions.<sup>16</sup>

Both motive and intention are grounded in action and are precursors to action. Macmurray assumed that action was defined by intention which "involves knowledge as a determinant of purposeful movement."<sup>17</sup>

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11. PR p.114

12. Ibid

13. Jeffko, op. cit., p.164

14. PR p.113

15. Jeffko, op. cit., p.97

16. SA pp.194-195

17. PR p.64

However, this assumption has as its premise that there is a negative which is a "motive consciousness which determines purposive behaviour without knowledge, as relation to stimulus".<sup>18</sup>

"Intention, therefore, presupposes motivation, and a complete account of action involves the consideration of its motivation as well as of its intention."<sup>19</sup>

Every action has a motive and every intention to act must contain a motive. Every action has a motive, but is not determined by a motive.<sup>20</sup> Macmurray averred that: "motives do not determine action. Nevertheless, all action contains necessarily an element of reaction to stimulus, without which it would be impossible."<sup>21</sup> Motive is the stimulus to action, however, it does not determine the action but only stimulates or catalyses action.

In general motive signifies something that in general effects movement, which has its equivalent in the scientific application of the term 'energy'. In terms of organic behaviour a motive is that which accounts for the release of potential energy in response to a stimulus. When a primitive organism reacts in fear the reaction is defensive, which brings about the avoidance of danger, and is a motive. The organism does not know that it is in danger or for that matter what the danger is. Macmurray consequently concluded that the organism's "response to stimulus has a motive, but no intention; and this motive awareness accounts for the reaction, and determines its character".<sup>22</sup>

An example of such a reaction to a stimulus is the habitual patterns which make up a person's character. Macmurray held that: "Habits are, in fact, those tendencies to respond to particular

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18. Ibid

19. Ibid

20. Jeffko, op. cit., p.99, Bozzo, op. cit., pp. 183-184

21. SA p. 196

22. SA pp. 195-196

types of stimulation in determinate ways which have been established in the agent in the process of practical experience."<sup>23</sup> Macmurray defined a person's character as "the systems of habits in an individual".<sup>24</sup> These automatic responses which make up a person's character are then bound up with the concept of motive and not with the realisation of intention.

However, this is not the central source of motivation, although this does illustrate the breadth of the stimulus and response definition of motive. The motive is the direction of "physical energy" which is a spasmodic or automatic response.<sup>25</sup> Macmurray conceived of all motives as being emotional<sup>26</sup> with a negative and positive pole. The positive personal motivational pole is love, whereas the negative motivational pole is fear.<sup>27</sup> The isolation of the basic poles of motivation should be understood as the extremes of a wide intervening spectrum of emotions.<sup>28</sup> Both poles of motivation are operative in all personal action, since the negative and positive poles are complementary.<sup>29</sup> Macmurray noted that: "both the positive and negative motives are operative in all personal action. It is for this reason that we have described the original motivation of the personal as bipolar, and 'love' and 'fear' as the positive and negative poles of a single motivation."<sup>30</sup> Personal motivation is more than just an organic impulse, which would restrict love to an erotic impulse or sexual impulse, and fear to panic. Love and fear as personal motive are not just panic and sexual impulse, but

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23. BS p.247

24. SA p.196

25. BS p.242

26. RE p.23

27. PR p.71

28. Bozzo, op. cit., p.169

29. Ibid p.275

30. PR p.70



controlled behaviour which with the personal other is a step towards communication, with its concomitant possibility of mutuality. The single motivation is found in the combination of love and fear brought about by the personal other, since one not only loves the other, but also fears the other. Both motives refer to the personal relationship between the personal other and the self, thereby reducing both motives to a "single motivation".<sup>31</sup>

Up to this point motives have been examined. However, though every action has a motive, one may also intend an action. The absence of intention for Macmurray obviates the question of morality arising.<sup>32</sup> Consequently, the first factor, that merits examination, is Macmurray's understanding of intention and his approach to the connection of intention and its collateral factor of attention. Since every action has a motive, but can only be determined by intention, what place does attention play in Macmurray's conception of intention? Attention is the directing factor in our knowledge of the situation in which one is acting.<sup>33</sup> Intention is the practical aspect, whereas in Macmurray's terms attention is the reflective aspect of the determination of direction of activity.<sup>34</sup> Macmurray held that:

We intend a modification of the Other, to be determined by our agency. We attend to a mode of the Other which is already determinate in order that it may reveal to us the structure of its determination. Thus 'intention' and 'attention' refer respectively to the forward looking and the backward looking aspects of knowledge in action, to anticipation and memory.<sup>35</sup>

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31. PR pp.69-70

32. Bozzo, op. cit., pp.183-184

33. PR p.110

34. SA p.171

35. SA pp.171-172

Macmurray maintained that: "in action, we select in attention what is relevant to our intention, or rather what we consider to be relevant".<sup>36</sup> What is not attended to, and therefore outside of intention, is a matter of response to stimulus, i.e. motivation.

Attention refers to our apprehension of a situation at the point of action, which is necessary for the formation of our intention before we act. However, a matter of misapprehension is not an immoral act in itself, since it is only a lack of skill.<sup>37</sup> Intention is a pivotal point for morality. Intention is the process of "looking forward" that one does before action, which directs action. Particular actions are determined by the particular intentions, which a person forms, from moment to moment in terms of his valuation and discrimination of his situation.<sup>38</sup> Intention is the determination of action guided by attention; the whole being propelled by motive.

Macmurray stated that: "Any intentional activity moves from the present towards the future."<sup>39</sup> Each specific action is determined by an intention. However, Macmurray made plain that the intention is not equivalent to the end of the action. Macmurray asserted that intention is in the action, and is not fully determinate. The analysis of actions into means and end is reflective and presupposes that the action is both complete and successful. Our actions are necessarily planned in advance.<sup>40</sup> This means that "action is not teleological, but intentional".<sup>41</sup> One cannot limit

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36. SA p.173

37. PR p.114

38. SA p.198

39. BS p.215

40. SA p. 175

41. SA p.150

the determination of action to a mere analysis of the ends and means. Telos is different from the concept of intention in that it is applicable only to the "description and comprehension of organic behaviour".<sup>42</sup> Although intention is a matter of looking forward, it is not just a matter of looking for the end. Intention is prospective, whereas Telos is retrospective.<sup>43</sup>

Intention is more directly linked to knowledge than motive. Only persons can act with intention and as we have seen only in terms of knowledge. When one acts without knowledge one is only referring to the habitual pattern, which is not a matter of the intentional, but of the motivational. The negative of intention is the habitual motive of character and the knowledge or interest of attention. Intention consists of the subordinate components of knowledge and motive.<sup>44</sup> A particular action in being determined, in terms of it being forward looking, becomes "the cutting edge of consciousness in action".<sup>45</sup>

A clear and more comprehensive impression of Macmurray's perception of the terms intention can be obtained by contrasting and comparing the term intention with the term motive. It must be realised that for Macmurray the moral character of an action is partially dependent upon its intention but not upon its motive.

The first distinction is that motives need not be conscious, whereas intention must be conscious.<sup>46</sup> Secondly, intention operates only within the personal modes of existence, whereas motive has a broader and more general application, since one finds motives in

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42. Ibid

43. Jeffko, op. cit. p.102

44. Vos, Kenneth Duane, "The Contribution of Edmond Cahn, H. Richard Niebuhr and John Macmurray to the Ethics of Responsibility" (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: Columbia University, 1972) p.230

45. Ibid

46. Jeffko, op. cit., p. 98, SA p.195

all three fields of existence — material, organic and personal.<sup>47</sup> Thirdly, motive is a matter of impulse and emotion,<sup>48</sup> whereas intention is fully rational.<sup>49</sup> Fourthly, on the personal level, motive is a matter of feeling whereas intention is much more complex. Intention involves the agents apprehension of the situation (attention); his discrimination and evaluation of the alternative ways that he can act and finally the actualisation of the chosen alternative. Fifthly, on the personal level, motive is a general disposition, whereas intention is particular,<sup>50</sup> although it must be pointed out that certain intentions can be labelled as general. A 'general intention' is the intention that remains the same for each succeeding particular intention, even though the 'general intention' is the same for each of the actions. In a letter to Walter G Jeffko, Macmurray cast further light upon his conception of a general intention. A general intention directs a number of subordinate and particular intentions.<sup>51</sup> The general intention is practical and is a form of particular intention. One might say that there is a 'general' or 'larger' particular intention directing several subordinate levels of particular intention.

Finally, motive is the negative aspect of intention. Macmurray asserted that: "What determines an action is its intention; but we shall be prepared to find that the motive of an action is contained within the intention as its negative aspect."<sup>52</sup> In summary, motive is unconscious or conscious feeling, emotion or impulse on the

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47. Ibid

48. RE p.23

49. Jeffko, op. cit., p.98

50. Jeffko, op. cit., pp.100-101, SA p.198

51. Ibid pp.103-104

52. SA p.195

material, organic and personal level; whereas intention is conscious, deliberate, rational and only on the personal level.

The importance of intention is that it is a necessary part of the definition of morality, as is the personal.<sup>53</sup> Macmurray believed that moral 'rightness' or 'wrongness' resided in intention,<sup>54</sup> although this is not the only element in morality, it is a necessary element in the moral equation. Macmurray assumed that: "An action is defined by its intention, and its absolute rightness must lie, therefore, in the rightness of its intentions."<sup>55</sup>

#### Morality as a Matter of the Relation with the Other

Although, the rightness of an action lies in the intention, the moral rightness of an action demands the inclusion of the relationship between persons, since intention may only operate within the personal sphere. Macmurray concluded that: "the moral rightness of an action, it might be widely agreed, rises from the fact that the actions of one person affect, either by the way of help or hindrance, the actions of others."<sup>56</sup> The intention of one particular agent is inherently related to the intention of the other, which means that: "the morality of an action is inherent in action itself, and does not supervene in cases where a particular action has consequences which impinge in a critical fashion on the lives of other people".<sup>57</sup> Consequently, one must have both the intentional and relational present since both are necessary for morality. Morality is only within the field of the personal. The moral order has not been reached if one remains at the biological or physical

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53. Jeffko, cop. cit., p.99

54. PR p.120

55. PR p.116

56. Ibid

57. PR p.117

level.<sup>58</sup> "For morality refers to the structure of personal relations which unites the members in a community of agents, and personal relations are necessarily reciprocal."<sup>59</sup> The final and most fundamental principle for Macmurray is the familiar one, which is termed either relational, personal or communal.

If one calls the harmonious inter-relationships of agents a community, then one might say "that a morally right action is an action which intends community".<sup>60</sup> In terms of intention this means that one is morally right, if the particular intention of his action is a subordinate intention to the general intention, "to maintain the community of agents, and wrong if it is not so controlled".<sup>61</sup> The ultimate general intention, therefore, is the intention of a universal community. Moreover, the highest form of morality and the ultimate goal or moral philosophy is the creation and maintenance of a universal or overall community.<sup>62</sup> Macmurray in a letter to Walter G Jeffko, maintained that: "Any 'moral philosophy' which I could take responsibility for would rest upon the conviction that the rightness of actions depends upon a reference to the creation of universal community;..."<sup>63</sup>

Since personal relations is the groundwork from which morality springs, morality is intimately connected with the communal and the relational.<sup>64</sup> The social nature of a moral action is inherent in the action since the action of one agent is inherently related to the action of another.<sup>65</sup>

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58. Jeffko, op. cit., p.166

59. PR p.121

60. PR p.119

61. Ibid

62. Jeffko, op. cit., p.165

63. Ibid p.166

64. PR p.116

65. PR p.117



Macmurray from the beginning held that "Moral relations are dependent on the absolute value of the human being, as a free human spirit ..."<sup>66</sup> The concept of freedom is important to Macmurray's conception of morality since the concept of the free person in a mutual relationship is the cornerstone of Macmurray's philosophy. Macmurray stated that: "This inter-relation of agents, which makes the freedom of all members of a society depend upon the intentions of each, is the ground of morality."<sup>67</sup> An even more concise statement is "My freedom depends upon how you behave."<sup>68</sup> Macmurray from the very beginning held that there was an intimate, inter-relation and interdependent connection between the concepts of freedom, mutuality, morality and the personal, since they are all necessary for the existence of community. Macmurray in Freedom in the Modern World stated that: "Freedom, which is the basis of morality is a matter of spontaneous self-expression in action. ... The core of human freedom lies, therefore, in our capacity to be ourselves for other people."<sup>69</sup> Morality is, therefore, the expression of personal freedom. The interdependence of freedom, morality and mutuality within the community is seen in the statement that: "If the relations between individuals in any community are not harmonious, then its members must be frustrated. They cannot raise their intentions. They cannot be free."<sup>70</sup>

Macmurray stated that: "Friendship, therefore, is the essence of morality."<sup>71</sup> As in the case of the self and religion, Macmurray

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66. RE p.135

67. PR pp.118-119

68. PR p.119

69. FMW p.207

70. CH p.72

71. FMW p.209

is assuming that community or fellowship is the essence of morality. Communitality lies at the very heart of Macmurray's explanation of morality, as it did in his explanation of the self and religion. The inter-connected concepts of mutuality, personal relations and fellowships, i.e. community, plays an integral part in Macmurray's explanation and definition of morality.

Macmurray concentrates his discussion of morality upon the three categories of apperception which in turn yields three modes of morality. Therefore, any examination of Macmurray's three modes of morality must start with an examination of his three categories of apperception.

#### The Three Modes of Morality

All perception involves apperception since perception involves selection and interpretation.<sup>72</sup> Apperception is not so much a difference in thought as a way one thinks<sup>73</sup> or methods which one uses to think. There are certain universal and necessary forms of apperception which "bear the same relation to the empirical forms as do the categories in the Kantian theory of empirical concepts".<sup>74</sup> These categories are a priori concepts that determine the general form of all our experience. Macmurray held that:

In reflective or theoretical activity they determine the form of the questions we ask, and to that extent the form of the answers we find; yet they do not determine the answers. Similarly, our three universal and necessary dispositions are presuppositions of the possibility of action as such; and as 'a priori' motives, determine the way in which we apperceive the Other in action, as our practical response to the situation as we apprehend it. For this reason we may call this original system of apperception 'categorical' and its three determinations 'categories' of apperception.<sup>75</sup>

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72. PR p.111

73. SRR p.56

74. PR p.112

75. Ibid

These three categories of apperception give rise to the three ways of life or thought which in turn have their own 'moral' structure. There are three distinguishable 'modes of morality' that are rooted in these three categories. There is one positive apperception and two negative types of apperception.

Macmurray called the positive apperception 'communal' and the two negative types, which have already been mentioned in passing, respectively 'contemplative', which is the submissive form, and 'pragmatic' which is the aggressive form.<sup>76</sup> As has been noted throughout this study, these three different modes of apperception appear and reappear throughout Macmurray's work and are variously labelled as the scientific, pragmatic or practical mode; the artistic, aesthetic or contemplative mode; and the personal, communal or religious mode. Each of these ways of thinking or attitudes, which Macmurray entitled the three 'categories of apperception', are ways of looking at the world through different coloured lenses.<sup>77</sup> Therefore, as one would expect, the three different categories of apperception in turn to yield three modes of morality, as in the case of Macmurray's examination of society in which three different apperceptions of society gave rise to three different sets of ideas about the totality of human society.<sup>78</sup>

The first mode of morality that is identified by Macmurray is that which comes from apperceiving the world in a mechanical way or in a physical way. Macmurray characterised this as the 'pragmatic' mode of Persons in Relation; whereas in Freedom in the Modern World, which ~~was~~ an earlier work, he characterised this as

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76. Ibid

77. Nephew, Albert Henry, "Philosophy is Theology: The Nature and Function of Philosophy According to John Macmurray" (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: Marquette University, 1970) p.113

78. PR p.147

the mechanical mode of morality. The pragmatic mode of morality is a negative mode of morality which was termed in Freedom in the Modern World a false mode of morality, i.e. an unreal morality. The pragmatic mode of morality takes as its central presupposition that the material -- the life of action -- is real. The problem presented by the conflict of wills, is solved in this category of apperception by aggression, which is an effort to overpower the resistance of others within the group and compel them to submit. This makes the goal for life the appropriation of power, which reduces the relations between agents to one of competition, in particular the competition for power. "The problematic of action becomes the effort to achieve my own purpose in the face of resistance from the other."<sup>79</sup> However, since the agents are interdependent there must be a limit to an agent's power if there is any possibility of maintaining unity in society, i.e. a systematic co-operation between agents. Consequently one needs a mode of morality that fits in with this way of viewing human co-operation in society.

The pragmatic mode of apperception and morality is a matter of technological efficiency which is manifested by a pragmatic mentality.<sup>80</sup> Moreover one would expect a technological or mechanical solution to be offered to the problems of maintaining the harmony within society by this mode of morality.

Each individual has his own intention which he is determined to realise. His problem concerns the means to realise it in the face of resistance; it is efficiency in action that determines right and wrong. Now the technique for maintaining a harmony of co-operation in society is law, conceived

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79. PR p.147

80. PR p.114

as a means for keeping the peace. The pragmatic mode of morality will then be conceived as obedience to law -- 'to a moral law which the individual imposes upon himself, and through which he secures the universal intention to maintain the community of action. It will be a morality of self-control, of power over the self, limiting its own freedom for the sake of maintaining the community.<sup>81</sup>

Morality is expressed in terms of will-to-power in this mode with obligation, duty and a set of rules or principles as the limiting factors to the use of each individual's power.<sup>82</sup>

This mode of morality is very familiar and has its origins, as far as Western Philosophy is concerned, in Stoic philosophy<sup>83</sup> and its clearest historical expression in Ancient Rome.<sup>84</sup>

The essence of such a mechanical system of morality supposes that goodness is equated with obedience to a moral law. Macmurray's objection to this negative mode of morality is that: "Such a morality is false, because it destroys human spontaneity, both in thought and in feeling, by subjecting it to an external authority."<sup>85</sup> Someone is telling another before hand what to think and consequently what way he is to act. Macmurray objected to the assumption that morality is composed of obedience, since the responsibility for one's actions should not become someone else's, since this denies one's freedom. "If there were such a thing as a moral law then a perfectly good man would be an automation, a mere robot, with no human freedom at all."<sup>86</sup> Such a material or mechanical system as the pragmatic mode of morality, by concentrating upon obeying the law,

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81. PR p.125

82. Ibid

83. PR p.126

84. CH p.21

85. FMW p.102

86. FMW p.189

makes a human being behave as if he was a material object, which obeys laws. Macmurray naturally objected to this approach, since it simply "makes the mistake of thinking that human nature is the same as material nature". Of course it is not. "Material nature is free in obeying laws. Human nature is bound or enslaved in obeying laws."<sup>87</sup>

Although Macmurray held that law and legality are inappropriate for morality, he did not completely reject the use of moral principles. Moral principles for Macmurray are outwith a so-called system of 'moral law'.<sup>88</sup>

The negative antithesis to the 'pragmatic' mode is the 'contemplative' mode. The contemplative mode has been referred to at various times as organic, aesthetic, social or artistic. Macmurray depicted the contemplative mode as the second of the negative modes of apperception, which he labelled less ambiguously as the second false mode in his earlier work Freedom in the Modern World. For the contemplative mode the real world is the spiritual world, and actual life is immaterial or unreal.<sup>89</sup> Macmurray identified the contemplative view of the world with the organic representation of the world.<sup>90</sup> Macmurray originally identified the social or contemplative mode of morality with the organic approach.<sup>91</sup> The main thrust of Macmurray's examination and analysis of the contemplative mode revolves around three different conceptions. Since for the contemplative mode the real world is the life of the spirit, the life of thought and imagination seeks self-realisation in the private

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87. FMW p.191

88. FMW p.192

89. PR p.123

90. PR p.115

91. FMW p.194



and isolated world of thought and feelings.<sup>92</sup> An agent, that exists within the 'contemplative framework', has only a minimal amount of time and energy to spend upon the practical life, since a predominant amount of his time and energy will be directed to a life of reflection and contemplation.<sup>93</sup> The 'contemplative individual' in order to apply a minimal amount of energy to the life of the group "must conform in practice, and make the practical life a means to the inner life of the mind". This is only made possible if "the practical life can be made automatic, a matter of routine and habit, which supports as a whole a deliberate and intentional life of reflection, contemplation and ideal construction".<sup>94</sup> This calls for the establishment of a common form of life.<sup>95</sup> Macmurray deemed the contemplative mode possible if:

there is established a common form which is unchanging, within which the activity of each member is adjusted to that of the others automatically. The form will be of an organic type, a system of social habit, in which the activity of each member is functionally related to the activity of the others, so that the practical life of the society is a balanced and harmonious unity, a system of social habit. To maintain this each member must have his function in the common life; he must be trained from childhood to recognise the social pattern and his own function in it, and to develop the system of habits which makes conformity to it a second nature.<sup>96</sup>

The second principle that differentiates the 'contemplative' from the other modes of morality is the idea of form. Macmurray considered 'stylistic rightness' to be the underlying aesthetic element in the contemplative mode.<sup>97</sup> "The contemplative mode of

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92. Jeffko, *op. cit.*, p.168

93. *Ibid*

94. PR p.124

95. Bozzo, *op. cit.*, p.206

96. PR p.124

97. PR p.114

morality is then a morality of good form."<sup>98</sup> The standard for the mode of morality is aesthetic and must be felt. "It is a kind of beauty or grace in social relations, a matter of style, of balance, of tact and poise."<sup>99</sup> The contemplative mode, unlike the pragmatic, cannot be reduced to a set of rules; it rests upon insight and intuition.

The third principle that is of importance, which is stressed in Macmurray's early definition of the contemplative mode of morality, is the subordination of the individual to society. Macmurray viewed our function in society as being one of taking our place in the social organisation and devoting ourselves to our task. "So the ideal of social service arises, and social morality."<sup>100</sup> The voice of social morality talks always of service, as self-devotion and self sacrifice. "Our duty is to serve others, to serve our country to serve humanity."<sup>101</sup> Human goodness is common goodness.<sup>102</sup>

Macmurray has several objections to this second negative or false mode of morality. Macmurray believed that when society is placed before the personal, the spontaneity of the individual is limited.<sup>103</sup> Social morality in any form as opposed to the communal is false, since it inevitably subordinates human beings to a social organisation.<sup>104</sup> There is the danger that morality can be reduced to nothing more than a set of manners,<sup>105</sup> thereby destroying morality. There is one obvious danger that Macmurray did not stress.

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98. PR p.124

99. Ibid

100. FMW p.196

101. FMW p.197

102. FMW p.196

103. FMW p.102

104. FMW p.199

105. PR p.124

The contemplative mode divides the person between the public and the private world neither which can become a basis for authentic action.<sup>106</sup>

This mode of morality has its classical exposition in Plato's Republic<sup>107</sup> and its clearest historical expression among the Ancient Greeks.<sup>108</sup>

The final mode of apperception, which will be dealt with, is the only positive mode of apperception or less ambiguously the only true mode of morality. This is the personal, religious or communal mode of morality.

Macmurray stated that a morally right action is an action which intends community".<sup>109</sup> Not surprisingly the only positive mode of morality is the communal. The communal mode is the hetero-centric mode, i.e. the mode which makes the centre of reference of the agent the personal other. "To act rightly is then to act for the sake of the Other and not for oneself."<sup>110</sup> In the first two false or negative modes one apperceives deeds in terms of technique or in terms of style. However, the true or positive mode has for its central point of reference the other. Macmurray in his collection of talks entitled Freedom in the Modern World has, as the centre of his concept of 'true morality', the notion of friendship; the idea of existing for the other is central to both heterocentrism and friendship. "Morality or human goodness is essentially a matter of friendship."<sup>111</sup> "Friendship is the essence of morality."<sup>112</sup>

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106. Vos, op. cit., p.203

107. PR p.125

108. CH p.21

109. PR p.119

110. PR p.122

111. FMW p.207

112. FMW p.209

Friendship or community combines with intention to form the basis of Macmurray's conception of 'true morality'. The objective for the personal mode of morality is the maintenance of "positive personal relations between all agents as the bond of community".<sup>113</sup> The normal expression of this mode is 'thou shalt love thy neighbour' or 'love your enemies'.

It would strictly be correct to call this mode of morality Christian. However, Macmurray believed that one should not label this as the Christian mode, since one of the two negative modes has also been labelled as Christian.<sup>114</sup> The clearest historical expression of the communal mode is the ancient Hebrews.<sup>115</sup> Macmurray admitted that this type of morality was transmitted to Europe via the Christians.<sup>116</sup>

#### The Communal as the Mode of True Morality

Macmurray presented three categories of apperception which are almost identical in three of his works. In Persons in Relation and Freedom in the Modern World he labelled these three categories as either mechanical or pragmatic; social or contemplative; and the positive mode as personal or communal. However, there is also another occurrence of this theme in The Clue to History, which utilises the categories of Roman, Greek and Hebrew. Macmurray, throughout his work, has consistently put forward three categories of apperception which also appear as three modes of morality. Moreover, Macmurray consistently advocated only one true or positive mode of morality which has as its essence either, friendship, mutuality, community or fellowship, which are manifestations of the hetro-centric approach to morality.

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113. PR p.122

114. PR p.123

115. CH p.21

116. PR p.123

At the centre of Macmurray's discussion of true or positive morality is the concept of community and its concomitant concepts. Macmurray's central thesis revolves around the fact that personhood is only truly revealed in community. Therefore, the assumption that communal morality is the only fitting type of morality to be applied to personal relationships is consistent with Macmurray's overall approach.

The moral problematic arises from the conflict of wills. Morality, no matter what mode of apperception is being applied, leads to an effort to resolve this conflict of wills. Therefore, one can say that morality is essentially social,<sup>117</sup> i.e. involved with relations. However, one does not find true, positive morality because one is merely involved in a social situation. The definition of a morally right action is one that intends community as long as a community is defined as a "harmonious interrelation of agents".<sup>118</sup> The general intention of each individual within a group defined as community, should be a unifying one. Macmurray formulated it in this way:

Any act of any agent is an expression of his own freedom. But if the world is one action, any particular action determines the future, within its own limits, for all agents. Every individual agent is therefore responsible to all other agents for his actions. Freedom and responsibility are, then, aspects of one fact. The intention of any agent is, however, relative to his knowledge of the Other. His responsibility cannot extend beyond his knowledge. Consequently, whatever he does is morally right if the particular intention of his action is controlled by a general intention to maintain the community of agents, and wrong if it is not so controlled.<sup>119</sup> Not only is moral order found within the community, since morality is limited to the personal which is found in the community, but it is also restricted to the community in terms of its intention.

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117. PR p.116

118. PR p.119

119. Ibid

The only morally right, general intention that overrides other intentions is the intention to maintain community. Community is the essence not only of the correct mode of morality, but it is also the primary intention that is applicable within the true mode of morality. Community is at the very centre of Macmurray's understanding and explanation of morality. Macmurray maintained that: "Any human society is a moral entity."<sup>120</sup> The very existence of relationships within any group is enough to present a moral problem. Therefore, one can act morally only when the conflict of wills is conquered. Macmurray is uncompromising in his identification of morality and community. This is because true morality is possible only within the community, which is where there is no conflict of wills, since the other comes before the self. Morality as we have seen expresses the necessary and universal intention to maintain the community,<sup>121</sup> nevertheless, the approach to morality, which considers morals only in terms of human relationships, has a single primary general intent, i.e. the unity of community, which is not the primary expression of morality for Macmurray. "The full realisation of the moral intention can only be reached in a relation between two persons in which each cares wholly for the other, and for himself only for the sake of the other."<sup>122</sup> The definition of morality in terms of the other as the centre and not the self as central, is the basic requirement of community and morality, which makes these two aspects of human activity inseparable.

The term heterocentric best characterises Macmurray's moral philosophy, since it includes the communal and intentional aspect

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120. PR p.128

121. PR p.189

122. PR p.189



that Macmurray required to be present in true and positive types of morality.

The essence of morality for Macmurray is the intention of putting the other before the self, in other words being heterocentric in your intentions and consequently heterocentric in your actions. This includes the general intention of harmonious relationships between agents in the community. Negatively motivated action is 'egocentric', while positively motivated action, which has the centre of reference outside of oneself, is 'heterocentric'.<sup>123</sup> Heterocentrism is placed in reference to Macmurray's bipolar concept of personal motivation next to the positive pole of motivation.

The communal mode is heterocentric, whereas the pragmatic and contemplative modes are egocentric.<sup>124</sup> Heterocentrism for Macmurray defines the intrinsic nature of true or positive morality, whereas egocentrism represents the intrinsic nature of false or negative morality. Considering Macmurray's dependence upon the empirically valid fact of human relationships for his explanation of religion and the self as well as society and the community, it is not unexpected to find that true morality is explained in terms of personal relationships, i.e. heterocentrically, whereas false morality is explained as a matter of the isolated self, i.e. egocentrically.

Macmurray defined or explained positive or personal morality by the use of two terms. The first term was 'friendship' which was used in Freedom in the Modern World to designate heterocentric types of relationships. The second term used in Persons in Relations was communal which also designated a heterocentric approach. Both

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123. PR p.189

124. PR pp.122-123

of these terms seem to be interchangeable, since when one examines the relationship between two friends or the basic structure of community, one finds the same phenomena in operation, i.e. the combination of mutuality, reciprocity and heterocentrism. An apt illustration of this is found in Macmurray's analysis of community:

If then, we isolate one pair, as the unit of personal community, we can discover the basic structure of community as such. The relation between them is positively motivated in each. Each then, is heterocentric; the centre of interest and attention is in the other, not in himself. For each, therefore, it is the other who is important, not himself. The other is the centre of value.<sup>125</sup>

Heterocentrism lies at the very centre of Macmurray's understanding of personal community. Not only is heterocentrism central to Macmurray's conception of community, but it is also central to his conception of real religion. "Real religion is heterocentric."<sup>126</sup> Man in relation to another and in terms of the other is real for Macmurray. The isolated individual, on the other hand, who is 'egocentric' is not real and has no place in Macmurray's conception of positive morality and religion.

In a letter to Walter G Jeffko, Macmurray starkly revealed this complete identification of true morality and heterocentrism.

Macmurray wrote that:

Any 'moral responsibility' which I could take responsibility for would rest on the conviction that the rightness of action depends upon a reference to the creation of universal community; and that a totally moral activity would be totally heterocentric, totally concerned with 'the Other' and with myself only as necessarily involved with the Other. 'The creation of community is the end of action' might be a formulation I should accept.<sup>127</sup>

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125. PR p.158

126. PR p.170

127. Jeffko, op. cit., p.166

There is little doubt that Macmurray saw the concept of morality to be defined only in terms of the community or even more fundamentally in terms of heterocentrism. Therefore, only human relations can be judged morally and only heterocentric actions can be judged to be morally right.

Macmurray as has been observed before in his desire to identify and utilise an empirically acceptable basis for his thinking about morality and religion, has focused upon the community. Macmurray confined his definition of morality to the heterocentric and communal while relegating the concept of love to the position of motive for actions, but love itself without the intention of community and the accompanying force of heterocentrism is believed to have no moral force.

CHAPTER 13

A General Examination and Critique  
of Macmurray's View of Ethics

Before comparing and contrasting Macmurray's theory of ethics to Christian Ethics, it is necessary and will be constructive to compare and contrast Macmurray's heterocentric approach to a number of philosophical theories about, and systems of, ethics. Since it is outwith the scope of this study to compare Macmurray's theory of ethics to all the contemporary and classical theories of ethics, the analysis will be limited to attempting to place Macmurray's theory within the general framework of philosophical and theological thinking.

Macmurray's threefold modal approach to ethics closely approximates other meta-ethical attempts to produce a comprehensive survey of ethics, and gives a legitimate point of direct comparison with which to begin our investigation. The ternary method of H. Richard Niebuhr closely resembles Macmurray's three modes of morality. H. Richard Niebuhr labelled his three categories of ethics teleological, deontological and responsive.<sup>1</sup> The first two categories are the usual ethical alternatives which are also labelled as 'goal-seeking' and 'rule-obeying'.<sup>2</sup> Paul Ramsey also proposed a similar threefold system of classification, which is based upon the nomenclature of William K. Frankena. Ramsey identified the two familiar categories of deontology (moral duty) and teleology (goal to be achieved) as well as proposing a third category which he entitled 'agapism', i.e. the normative theory of Christian ethics.<sup>3</sup> Vos has also identified Macmurray's threefold modular method as teleological, deonto-

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1. Outka, Gene H. and Ramsey, Paul, Norm and Context in Christian Ethics (SCM Press Ltd.: London, 1968) p.342

2. Ibid

3. Ramsey, Paul, Deeds and Rules in Christian Ethics (Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Papers No. 11) (Oliver and Boyd: Edinburgh, 1965) p.2

logical and dialogical.<sup>4</sup> The first two categories are frequently characterised as teleological and deontological, but there is no consistent term used for the third category. Long utilises three motifs which are simply and concisely entitled deliberative, prescriptive and relational.<sup>5</sup> Macmurray's three modes of morality can be characterised as yet another ternary set of categories for classifying different types of ethical approaches. The teleological category concentrates upon the end of an action or the consequences, whereas the deontological category concentrates upon the means or the rules to be obeyed.

#### The Deontological and Teleological Modes of Morality

Macmurray's pragmatic mode of morality corresponds to the deontological category of ethics. Macmurray wrote that: "The reference in science to action is to its aspects as means; that of art is to its aspect as end;..."<sup>6</sup> The pragmatic mode of Macmurray focuses upon the scientific part of human thought. The pragmatic mode of morality centres upon the technological aspect of morality which concentrates upon the actual methods or means used. The focus of the pragmatic mode is to be found in the techniques of maintaining harmony. Macmurray asserted that: "The pragmatic mode of morality will then be conceived as obedience to law —..."<sup>7</sup> The pragmatic mode of morality is a reassertion of the deontological category, i.e. 'rule-obeying'.

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4. Vos, Kenneth, Duane, "The Contribution of Edmond Cahn, H. Richard Niebuhr and John Macmurray to the Ethics of Responsibility" (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: Columbia University, 1972) p.234

5. Long, Edward L. A Survey of Christian Ethics (Oxford University Press: New York, 1967) p.ix

6. PR p.177

7. PR p.125



The second mode of morality is the contemplative mode which closely resembles the teleological category. The contemplative mode concentrates upon the morality of good form<sup>8</sup> and stylistic rightness.<sup>9</sup> The organic whole of the action is the important aspect of 'aesthetic' morality.<sup>10</sup> The end of an action, the goal sought becomes the decisive factor. Speaking of the contemplative mode, Macmurray asserted that: "Moreover, it is judged from the standpoint of the spectator; since the agent must concentrate his attention on the end, and the style of his activity, resting upon skill already acquired, is a matter of habit."<sup>11</sup>

Macmurray rejected both the teleological and deontological mode of morality as false or negative. The only true mode of morality for Macmurray is the third mode of morality which he called the communal mode of morality. Macmurray's third mode of morality loosely corresponds to the 'response ethic' of H. Richard Niebuhr; the 'relational' motif of Edward L. Long; the 'agapism' of Paul Ramsey; and the 'dialogical' alternative of Martin Buber. The heterocentric approach of Macmurray falls into the same category as the contextual and situational approaches to Christian Ethics.<sup>12</sup> It is comparable to Niebuhr's 'ethic of response' with its focus upon one's response to the other person.<sup>13</sup>

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8. PR p.124

9. PR p.114

10. PR p.115

11. PR p.114

12. Long, op. cit., pp.117-164

13. Outka, op. cit., p.342

Macmurray's rejection of the teleological and deontological mode is worthy of consideration, since it is foundational to his attempt to present an ethic that is neither based upon 'goal-seeking' nor on 'rule-obeying'. However, one may ask did Macmurray truly rise above the problems presented by teleology and deontology? Also one may ask did Macmurray need to reject completely these two approaches to ethics? Did Macmurray need to reject or did he manage to supplant the teleological and deontological procedures?

The contemplative mode of morality is the category variously labelled as the 'goal seeking' mode of morality or the teleological ethical type. The teleological ethicist generally holds that: "our only duties have reference to ends and are to produce value, or perhaps to distribute it in certain ways".<sup>14</sup> The most notable form of teleological ethics is utilitarianism. Utilitarianism in some ways resembles Macmurray's communal approach as well as his contemplative mode of morality. However, the concept of hedonistic utilitarianism was rejected out of hand by Macmurray. Macmurray recognised that: "People have always sought for some way of life in which pleasure could be increased and pain avoided, and the whole philosophy of utilitarianism is an elaborate effort to persuade us that it is possible. The maximum of pleasure with the minimum of pain for the greatest number of people is the ideal of utilitarianism."<sup>15</sup> However, Macmurray has confined his rejection to only one type of utilitarianism, i.e. hedonistic utilitarianism. Whereas, ideal utilitarianism allows other things to be held as the 'good' that is the thing to be sought, such as personal mutual relations or

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14. Lacey A.R. A Dictionary of Philosophy (Routledge & Kegan Paul: London, 1976) p.60

15. RE p.47

aesthetic experience.<sup>16</sup> So one might easily fit Macmurray's heterocentrism into the utilitarian framework, which would mean that the goal to be sought is that of perfect community and the greatest good to be sought would be heterocentric personal relations. Such an ideal utilitarian type of approach to community has already been proposed by one of the fathers of utilitarianism.

Francis Hutcheson was one of the sources of utilitarianism,<sup>17</sup> and his theories closely resemble some of Macmurray's thinking about ethics, which demonstrates the rather indistinct line between the contemplative and communal modes of morality. Francis Hutcheson held that virtue was basically a motive of pure benevolence. Hutcheson concentrated upon the other and rejected the egocentric approach found in hedonism. Hutcheson considered the concern for one's own well-being in itself to be morally neutral (as opposed to Macmurray's assumption that it is negative). For Hutcheson virtue consisted of a concern for the well-being of others, i.e. the motive of benevolence and a concern for the moral character that will produce the motive of benevolence.<sup>18</sup> Such an approach produces two questionable assumptions which can also be identified in Macmurray's ethical theories. The first assumption, that Hutcheson makes, is that man is capable of motives that are rational and of disinterested good will. The second assumption is that benevolence is the basis of all moral virtue. The two assumptions that parallel those of Hutcheson in Macmurray's thought are, firstly, that man is capable of rational and disinterested concern for the other and that,

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16. Lacey, op. cit., p.60

17. Copleston, Frederick, A History of Philosophy (Image Books: Garden City, New York, various dates) Volume 5 Part I p.93

18. Garnett, A. Campbell, Ethics: A Critical Introduction (The Ronald Press Co.: New York, 1960) p.133

secondly, the communal or the relational is the only source of virtue. Does Macmurray's theory of ethics too closely confine true or real moral problems to the community?

However, Macmurray did not assume that happiness or any other type of good action should be the end product of all moral action. A right or wrong act for Hutcheson is determined by its consequences.<sup>19</sup> Macmurray certainly would not have advocated such a teleological assumption. Macmurray's theories cannot necessarily be construed to mean that the other's good is the important factor, but it can be interpreted to mean that the other person should come before the self, thereby possibly eliminating the teleological overtones. However, if one maintains that the end product of a moral action is the harmony of the community; then one can easily slip back towards the teleological stance, which makes Macmurray's theory vulnerable to the usual deontological objection; that every form of teleological ethics by concentrating upon the end of an action, falls prey to the false assumption that if a consequence is sufficiently good it will justify the means.<sup>20</sup> Macmurray was at pains to avoid this error. "But this is incorrect, since what we are judging is an action; and the end, considered without reference to the means taken to achieve it, is not an action at all but a state of affairs."<sup>21</sup>

Macmurray attempted to divorce the concept of the end from the concept of intention, thereby removing any possible teleological bias. Macmurray successfully separated the concept of intention from the concept of 'goal-seeking', according to Vos, since Macmurray maintained that the 'end' is a product of reflection,<sup>22</sup> whereas the

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19. Ibid p.137

20. Ibid p.374

21. PR p.115

22. Vos. op. cit., p.240

intention "is determined progressively in action."<sup>23</sup> Macmurray warned his reader that: "intention is not to be confused with end, or a common intention with a common end, or a continuity of intention with the persistence of a determinate end".<sup>24</sup>

Macmurray also pointed out that: "The end is no longer intended; it merely constitutes the last event in the process isolated in attention, though the ground of this isolation is the fact that it was intended."<sup>25</sup> Macmurray divorced the idea of the end from the intention by assuming that the 'end' was a part of reflection as opposed to intention in action. However, the end is not only something that is part of reflection, it is part of the action in that it is the consequence of the action and the goal or direction of the action. If an action has direction and the action is intended the two overlap. Means for Macmurray is something that is determined by the end. "The means is discriminated, and chosen, from amongst alternatives; but only for the end, and not for itself."<sup>26</sup> Certainly Macmurray's attempts to remove the threat of action as determined by ends and replace it with the determination of the internal progression of action is praiseworthy, but it overlooks the fact that the consequences of an action are a part of the action itself. Macmurray's assumption that intention is a part of the practical, whereas the end is a part of the theoretical, is helpful in understanding his concept of intention, but it is not totally satisfactory when one comes to look at the 'end' in terms of the reflective as well as the pragmatic, i.e., be as good and as ideal.<sup>27</sup>

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23. SA p.213

24. Ibid

25. SA p.175

26. SA p.193

27. SA p.175

Although Macmurray totally rejected the validity of the teleological mode of ethics, one must remember that Macmurray drew rather a vague line between his concept of contemplative morality and his concept of communal morality, particularly in his early work Freedom in the Modern World. Macmurray did not advocate a basically teleological approach, but there are similarities. A teleological ethic would advocate the setting up of community harmony as a goal, and it would designate the principle of loyalty as the underlying principle of community.<sup>28</sup> Macmurray held that heterocentrism was the underlying principle behind community. However, one must be aware that there is a constant danger of the harmony of community being construed as a goal, which would be sought sometimes at the expense of others.

Macmurray's mode of communal morality overlaps with his contemplative mode, whereas his rejection or denial of the pragmatic mode of morality is complete. Macmurray completely rejected the deontological approach to ethics, while retaining a teleological bias. Deontological ethics is the 'rule-obeying' type of ethics,<sup>29</sup> i.e. one that rests upon moral duty.<sup>30</sup> William Frankena identified two different types of deontology, which he labelled as act-deontology and rule-deontology. Act-deontology assumes that basic judgements concern obligation, i.e. moral duty in terms of a particular base. Rule-deontology assumes that the standard of right and wrong is to be found in formal rules.<sup>31</sup> Deontology can either revolve around the obeying of rules or the judgement of obligation.

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28. Garnett, op. cit., p.375

29. Outka, op. cit., p.342

30. Ramsey, op. cit., p.2

31. Frankena, William K. Ethics (Prentice-Hall, Inc.: Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1963) p.15



H. Richard Niebuhr classified deontology as 'man-the-citizen' who asked "what is the law and what is the law of life".<sup>32</sup> A deontological theory of ethics is one which sees at least some acts as obligatory regardless of their consequences. The philosopher who emphatically enunciated such a theory was Immanuel Kant. According to Kant, objectively right behaviour can be inspired by a number of factors such as benevolence, but the only fact that makes it a morally correct solution is respect for the moral law.<sup>33</sup> This is an excellent example of the difference between Kant's thinking about ethics and that of Macmurray, even though Macmurray was influenced by Kant.

Macmurray rejected the pragmatic mode of morality which has as its centre the obedience to moral law.<sup>34</sup> Macmurray in defining the pragmatic mode of morality -- combining rule-and-act deontology -- noted that: "it will be expressed in terms of will, obligation and duty, as a set of rules or principles, which are the same for all, and which limit for each the use of his own power to do what he pleases".<sup>35</sup> The state and society are concerned with obligation, but it is not truly a moral problem for Macmurray, since it does not directly apply to personal relations within the community.

Macmurray certainly believed that the community demanded of the individual a certain amount of responsibility. Vos identifies Macmurray's idea of responsibility with H. Richard Niebuhr's idea of accountability. Macmurray's understanding of responsibility with

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32. Niebuhr, H. Richard, The Responsible Self: An Essay In Christian Moral Philosophy (Harper and Row, Publishers: New York, 1963) p.60, hereafter cited as RS

33. Olson, Robert G. Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Collier-Macmillan Limited: London, 1967) Vol.II p.342, hereafter cited as EP

34. PR p.125

35. Ibid

the community is a type of accountability and not obligation.<sup>36</sup> The idea of reciprocity as presented in Macmurray's work certainly does not depend upon any other criterion than man's mutuality. However, Macmurray's idea of obligation in community seems to be one of accountability which does not exclude the possibility of negative force. The anticipatory element is not one of wishing to help the other, but one of fear, i.e. fear of being mistaken.<sup>37</sup>

Macmurray rejected the idea of moral duty, since he reasoned that the concept of duty is something that is motivated by fear; therefore, duty is no longer applicable to morality. Newbigin commented upon Macmurray's dismissal of the concept of duty as a mechanical, i.e. pragmatic, awareness of the world which is imposed upon the emotional life by the pressure of fear.<sup>38</sup> Newbigin maintained that: "The intellect brings us knowledge simply of what is the empirical world around us; the very essence of the sense of duty is that it claims to mediate awareness of what is not yet but ought to be."<sup>39</sup> Newbigin identified Macmurray's failure to understand the importance of conscience with his misconception of obligation. However, Macmurray did clarify his position in Persons in Relation by identifying conscience with moral apperception.<sup>40</sup> However, Macmurray failed to realise that duty was more than just mechanical awareness motivated by fear. As Newbigin pointed out duty also contains a feeling of oughtness, or a sense of obligation. This leads to Newbigin's second objection. "Secondly we must observe, the sense of moral

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36. Vos, op. cit., pp.239-240

37. Ibid

38. Newbigin, J.E. Lesslie, Christian Freedom in the Modern World (Student Christian Movement Press: London, 1937) p.43 hereafter cited as CFMW

39. CFMW p.43

40. PR p.121

obligation and the fear of consequences of action are most emphatically not the same thing."<sup>41</sup> Newbigin called into doubt Macmurray's dismissal of duty as purely a product of the fear of consequences. Newbigin saw Macmurray's understanding and dismissal of the concept of duty to be incorrect, since duty is not merely something that can be reduced to a matter of fear. Since duty is a concept that is part of the pragmatic mode of morality, it is basically negative in motivation.

Newbigin went so far as to maintain that without a common sense of obligation the possibility of communion is no longer possible.<sup>42</sup> Relationships, according to Newbigin, depend upon independence and obedience. Such an interpretation, moreover, is close to Vos' interpretation of Macmurray. Vos labelled the two elements in personal relationships as freedom and accountability.<sup>43</sup> There is little question that Macmurray has to a certain extent recognised and made use of the concept of obligation in the form of accountability or responsibility. However, his interpretation of duty as intellectual and mechanical awareness motivated by fear is not a completely satisfactory account of what obligation might be, however, this interpretation is not fully developed in Macmurray's philosophy. Obligation does exist in a community and it is a necessary part of community, but one cannot have hate or fear as the motivating force behind community. Newbigin questioned quite rightly the wisdom of Macmurray's reduction of the imperative of duty or obligation to fear, which ignores the positive effect of duty within community.<sup>44</sup>

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41. CFMW p.43

42. CFMW p.75

43. Vos, op. cit., pp.239-240

44. CFMW p.76

Macmurray by subordinating the concept of obligation to one of accountability or responsibility of one person to another in a negative way, leads one to dismiss the concept of obligation which in itself might be a positive motivating force. Obligation is more than just the accumulated "residue of social training not making itself felt automatically as the voice of conscience".<sup>45</sup> Obligation is a need within a person, when presented with a choice and having picked the best alternative, to carry out the best alternative.<sup>46</sup> In personal relationships, the sense of obligation is the need to carry out the best alternative in terms of the other. One, therefore, can have a sense of moral obligation within Macmurray's ethical framework if one feels the need to continue supporting the community and feels the need to help the other out of love, both of which are the best alternatives. A sense of heterocentric obligation is necessary in order for one to carry out the proper choice. Obligation is more than a matter of fear, it is the thrusting force and need for the implementation of the best type of action.

#### The Third Category of Ethics

Vos sees the ethics of response mediating between the ideas of the utilitarians and Kant.<sup>47</sup> However, such a view might lead to the view that Macmurray's communal mode is nothing more than a synthesis formed from the thesis of teleology and the anti-thesis of deontology. Macmurray wisely decided to try to reject both the teleological and deontological views of morality, and then he tried to determine morality in terms of personal relations, which resembles H. Richard Niebuhr's concept of ethics as one of response, i.e. a

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45. Bertocci, Peter A. Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion (Prentice-Hall, Inc.: New York, 1955) p.241, hereafter cited as PR

46. PR p.246

47. Vos, op. cit., p.242

dialectical view of ethics. However, Macmurray did not wish to ameliorate between deontological and teleological ethics. However, one might be led to believe that Macmurray is trying to mediate between the 'goal-seeking' and 'rule-obeying' aspects of morality, because he seems unable entirely to remove these conceptions from his theories about ethics. His concept of intending community retains vestigial teleological assumptions. His idea of the accountability of the individual to the community has vestigial deontological assumptions. However, the main thrust of Macmurray's work is towards a third type of ethic that denies and tries to overcome the problems presented by the deontological and teleological approaches.

Macmurray, although retaining traces of the deontological and teleological elements, has opted for the third category of ethical thinking. . Anders Nygren first identified in 1923 a third type of ethic which he called the dispositional as opposed to the well-known types, i.e. the legalistic and the purposive schools of thought. Nygren favoured the third or dispositional interpretations of ethics. Nygren classified Christianity as a dispositional form of ethics.<sup>48</sup> However, as we have seen he was one of many to favour such a ternary system of classification. H. Richard Niebuhr characterised the three areas as 'man-the-maker' (teleology), 'man-the-citizen' (deontology), and 'man-the-answerer' (relational).<sup>49</sup> For our purposes considering Macmurray's overall approach one can safely label Macmurray's communal approach as an example of the relational or third category.

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48. Johnson, William A. On Religion: A Study of Theological Method in Schleiermacher and Nygren (E.J. Brill: Leiden, 1964) p.108

49. RS pp.60-65

A general definition of the relational<sup>a</sup> or third category of ethics is rather difficult, although one might loosely identify any discussion of ethics in terms of situation, persons and context as being relational or dialectic.<sup>50</sup> However, the concept of response which is mutual and reciprocal is the centre of any relational type of ethics.

H. Richard Niebuhr held that the relational contained the central concept of an interpreted response. Niebuhr considered two elements, other than those of interpretation and response, to be of importance in his description of relational ethics. Niebuhr considered the conception of accountability to be of importance not in a legalistic sense, but in terms of anticipation. The other element is social solidarity which places any action within a continuing discourse of interaction among persons in a continuing society.<sup>51</sup> Macmurray also utilised all four of these elements. A relationship certainly contains a response, and an intentional hetero-centric approach certainly is an interpretation of the correct response. The concept of harmony in the community parallels the concept of social solidarity, since both contain continuous interaction between persons. The conception of accountability is to be found in Macmurray's and Niebuhr's thought, but the former gives it much less attention.

Gordon D. Kaufman in The Context of Decision also proposed a ternary interpretation of ethics which is slightly different. Kaufman's three categories are humanistic ethics, naturalistic ethics and historic ethics, which to a certain extent resemble the three categories of Niebuhr and Macmurray. Kaufman considered

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50. Henry, Carl F.H. Baker's Dictionary of Christian Ethics (Baker Book House: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1973) p.183

51. RS pp.64-65

(a) see footnote 64 p. 243



the third or historic type of ethics (relational) to be a combination of the first two categories. Naturalism being the legalistic mode and humanism being the social ethic combining to form historicism which considers right action in terms of 'living-as-a-person-in-community'.<sup>52</sup> The historic category presupposes one is striving to live honestly in response to other persons. Kaufman held that the combination of the first two categories in the relational approach meant that "all of humanism's awareness of man's uniqueness and difference from nature" was included in the relational ethic and naturalism's awareness that man must "submit to that which is greater than, and of which he is a mere product is also taken up into this view".<sup>53</sup> Kaufman without destroying the conception of the uniqueness of man offers a way of combining all of the types, but subordinating them to the relational. Kaufman unlike Macmurray does not reject the first two categories of ethics out of hand.

Kaufman contends that there is a bifurcation to be found within the relational view of ethics; one subdivision being the non-theistic and the other being the theistic. Edward L. Long also considered the possibility of such a split and noted the existence of two types of norm-authority at work in relational ethics; this is the distinctive subdivisions of heteronomy and theonomy. The first being submission to an external authority; the second being submission to the authority of God. However, Long sees the heteronomous type of authority falling under the rubric of organisation authority.<sup>54</sup>

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52. Kaufman, Gordon D. The Context of Decision: A Theological Analysis (Abingdon Press: New York, 1961) p.25 hereafter cited as CD

53. CD p.26

54. Long, op. cit., p.120

Macmurray's heterocentric approach presupposes an external authority in the other, which places his morality within the non-theistic subdivision with its accompanying organisational elements

Before departing from the field of meta-ethics one should take note of the relativistic elements in Macmurray's work. Vos labelled Macmurray as a "social relativist", although Vos limited this to the "paradigm of the personal".<sup>55</sup> Macmurray's theory of heterocentrism does consider a morally right action to be in terms of the other, thereby making the other the centre of authority. One quite rightly might presuppose that one could never have an absolute or objective set of moral standards that are applicable to all men.<sup>56</sup> This might lead one to assume that Macmurray had relativistic tendencies. However, if one wishes to identify heterocentrism as a type of ethical relativism, it would be necessary to overlook Macmurray's absolute principle or norm of 'intending universal community'. Although Macmurray did exhibit certain relativistic tendencies, he also adhered to an absolute ethical norm. Macmurray's ethical system presents two conflicting views in that one can either be guided by a specific other, i.e. a particular person, or a general Other, i.e. the community. Macmurray offered no single principle for determining which of these two criteria is the primary factor. This stems from his ambiguous and incomplete interpretation of the communal. Community as a group or community as personal mutual relationships are the two interpretations of community that are in conflict with one another, when one tries to pinpoint the primary moral criteria. Consequently,

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55. Vos, op. cit., p.234

56. Macquarrie, John (ed.) A Dictionary of Christian Ethics (SCM Press Ltd.: London, 1967) p.289, hereafter cited as DCE

what authority or guideline is there for making a moral decision? Macmurray's conception of ethics does fit the idea of an autonomous norm-authority, e.g. a theonomous norm-authority, or superempirical norm-authority, i.e. a theonomous norm-authority, uneasily, since he seemed to be searching for an empirical basis for his theory of ethics, i.e. the community. Macmurray's approach vaguely assumed a heteronomous norm-authority, which presupposes that any prescription or norm comes from outside of oneself, i.e. from others<sup>57</sup> or the community. However, this does again present the problem of deciding whether the main norm is one of intending community or of being guided by another individual. Macmurray somewhat ambiguously held that the harmony of the group motivated heterocentrically was the norm-authority.<sup>58</sup>

Durkheim maintained that: "We have often had occasion to prove that the rules of morality are norms that have been elaborated by society, the obligatory character with which they are marked is nothing but the authority of society, communicating itself to everything that comes from it."<sup>59</sup> The community is the norm-authority for Durkheim, but unlike Macmurray, Durkheim seemed to realise that within community there is a large degree of conflict between the individual and the group. On the one hand the acceptance and love of the intimate group are necessary for the well-being of the individual. On the other hand the arms of the group which nourish and sustain can also confine, stunt and even suffocate the individual.<sup>60</sup> If one bases any ethical theory upon the "community, one must guard against the negative collectivistic aspects of the community. This ever re-occurring hazard might lead to the destruction of the unique

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57. von Wright, Georg Henrik, Norm and Action: A Logical Enquiry (Routledge and Kegan Paul: London, 1968) pp 75-76

58. PR pp. 119, 112

59. Durkheim, Emil, On Morality and Society: Selected Writings (The University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London, 1973) p. 16

60. DCE p. 81

qualities of the individual. One needs to prevent the community as a group from dominating the individual and thereby diminishing the impact of the mutual personal relationships within the community.

Macmurray's relativistic leanings point to his general agreement with the relational category with its accompanying danger of collectivism. Relativism implies "a view that standards differ from culture to culture and that any discussion of the intrinsically valid or permanently good is unjustified".<sup>61</sup> In a very profound sense ethical choice for Macmurray which is made in the relational context is relative. Macmurray's communal type of morality as Vos has pointed out can be considered to be relative, particularly to the situation and the context of the action. There seems to be a connection or points of contact between Macmurray's outlook and those of the situationalists and the contextualists.

#### Buber's Dialogical Theory and Altruism

Another area that is of direct interest is the connection between Macmurray's heterocentrism, altruism and Buber's dialogical theory of ethics. Since Macmurray in his autobiographical work wrote that Buber influenced his thinking, Buber's dialogical approach may well have close parallels to the communal approach of Macmurray.

Buber's philosophy of dialogue with its emphasis on wholeness, decision, presentness and uniqueness is the foundation of his ethics. Buber considered response to the other to be central to his ethics which parallels Macmurray's heterocentric conception. Buber's 'I-Thou' and 'I-It' categories correspond to Macmurray's personal and impersonal types of relationships, which contains the basic assumption that this applies to human existence as well as to morality.

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61. Long, op. cit., p.121

For Buber the idea of reciprocity and the experience of the other is essential. Macmurray considered intention to be central to any moral decision. Buber defined conscience in terms of a personal call to fulfil personal intention. However, Buber saw ethical decisions not only as being basically in terms of the immediate situation that confronts one, but also in terms of one's whole being before God.<sup>62</sup>

As we have already concluded there are definite differences between Macmurray's relational conception of man and Buber's dialogical conception of man. Macmurray understood man primarily in terms of the communal, which may obscure or even threaten the uniqueness of the individual, when challenged by the collective consciousness of the group. Buber combined the two motifs in his philosophy, i.e. the motifs of the 'I-Thou' and 'the single one'. The Second motif was modified into the "word of authority, the 'myth' which is the eternal thou".<sup>63</sup> This combination of elements comes from the merging of the two traditional lines of thought that is only partially to be found within Macmurray's thinking. First there is the ontological idea of "Mitsein" (the combination of mutual presence),<sup>64</sup> which stems from the idea of Friedrich Henrich Jacobi that: "Without Thou, the I is impossible" and Ludwig Feuerbach's idea that an I becomes real only through an opposite Thou.<sup>65</sup> The second traditional line of thought is that of Kierkegaard's concept of the 'single one'. Buber recognised that the two concepts could not walk together on the 'narrow ridge'; however, he did not

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62. Friedman, Maurice, "The Bases of Buber's Ethics" in The Philosophy of Martin Buber (Cambridge University Press: London, 1967) (ed.) Schlipp, Paul A. and Friedman, M. hereafter cited as PMB, pp.173-176

63. Kuhn, Helmut "Dialogue in Expectation" PMB p.661

64. Ibid p.657

65. Ibid



entirely abandon the second motif, but reinterpreted it, thereby attempting to save the concept of the unique individual, which may well be threatened by the collective nature of the community. Buber recognised the existence of the 'single one', but made the moral decision a social one.<sup>67</sup>

Macmurray undermined the uniqueness of the individual by too strongly stressing the inter-relatedness of man. One might presuppose quite justifiably, from Macmurray's conception of communal ethics, that any decision made by an individual separated from the social or communal matrix is not valid, since all judgements are inseparable from man's interaction with other men. If this is so, then the individual is not the moral unit, but the relationship of 'I-Thou' is the minimum moral unit. However, if one is in an impersonal relationship, it does not lessen or remove the onus of making a moral decision, even though this is outside of the comfortable world of the community. One can think in terms of the heterocentric, but the decision is in terms of the past experience of the individual and not just in terms of the present relational encounter. Without the recognition of the concept of the 'single one', one might easily overlook the fact that all decisions and judgements are ultimately a matter for the individual even though the individual may decide to go along with the group. Although one might make a decision because of the social pressure or communal pressure, the individual still chooses to give into the social pressure. One needs to think in terms of a theonomous/heteronomous system of thought, if one is to properly maintain a personal relational stance in any ethical decision.

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67. Ibid



The 'I-Thou' relationship with God is an ideal relationship, whereas the 'I-Thou' human relationship is ever-changing and only partial. Without the element of the transcendent Thou, i.e. God, one cannot even expect to make a lasting or general relational decision. Macmurray, although not denying the existence or importance of God in the dialectical equation, does not seem to realise the essential part that God must play not only motivationally, but intentionally and relationally in order to maintain the possibility of making responsive, relational and heterocentric ethical choice. One makes moral decisions as an individual, firstly in relation to God and then in relation to men, if one wishes to realistically apply a heterocentric approach. Within this sphere one encounters the expectations for certain actions from other human beings. However, do these expectations, even though they are heterocentric and communal, have moral force or are these only expectations of other human beings? Morality becomes morality with the power of God behind that of community. Without the factor of the relationship with God the force of the other is only human expectation. Kuhn concluded that Buber was aware that: "without a third reality there is no zwischenmenschlichkeit (interhuman relation) with a third reality entering between and uniting the partners; and this third factor must be more than a 'sphere'."<sup>68</sup> Without a third reality one only advocates a type of altruism based upon the relational model.

Macmurray by only considering the ethical in terms of a heteronomous norm-authority only presents an anthropocentric relational ethic which is in danger of becoming nothing more than an organisa-

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68. Ibid p.661

tional morality. At best Macmurray sometimes seems to be presenting a form of altruistic relationalism. Macmurray is not entirely non-theistic, but he seems to separate morality from theistic considerations, which means that morality is reduced to an altruistic approach to ethics. Macmurray is in danger of reducing the communal aspect of Christian ethics into a type of altruism. One cannot divorce the relational from God. For Buber the question unlike Kierkegaard is not between religion and morality, but between "a religion and morality wedded to the universal and a religion and morality wedded to the concrete".<sup>69</sup>

There are definite problems with Buber's ethical assumptions some of which also apply to Macmurray's ethical theories. Marvin Fox posits that even though culture is a pattern that arises from the deepest levels of life, that man must seek his own direction when culture breaks down. According to Buber, the integration of man into culture is vital. Marvin Fox averred that:

Surely Buber would not have us believe that the ideal of every culture is morally acceptable! Must we not distinguish between the moral worth of cultures? What principles, what general criteria shall we employ if we follow Buber's guidelines?<sup>70</sup>

The same doubts surround Macmurray's interpretation of community as the basis of morality. Surely Macmurray would not have us believe that the ideals of a particular community are necessarily morally acceptable. One cannot distinguish between the moral worth of one community over against another if such an assumption is made, i.e. if the only criteria one is offered is that of heterocentrism. Does any form of altruism give sufficient guidance to make general moral

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69. Freidman, op. cit. p.180

70. Foz, Marvin, "Problems in Buber's Moral Philosophy" PMB p.169

decisions. When one is without the divine aspect of morality, does not the final judgement become dependent upon an inadequate altruistic ethic? Is Macmurray's understanding of ethics too close to a purely altruistic approach and in turn does altruism equate with a purely relational approach to ethics? One needs to again return to Buber's and G.H. Mead's understanding of the relational aspect of man to understand the basic elements of these questions.

Buber seems to have favoured a theocentric form of personalism whereas Mead favoured a more heterocentric or anthropocentric personalism. Pfuetze reasons that Mead's theory "tends to induce a false optimism about human nature, while failing to explain the development of higher and more universal moral ideas".<sup>71</sup> Pfuetze in a critical comparison of Mead's theory of the social self, which closely resembles that of Macmurray, with that of Buber concluded that: "man is social yes, but above all, Buber would insist, he is socially related to God -- and this is the secret of all his other relations".<sup>72</sup> If one simplistically characterised Buber's approach as Man-God-Man, one would characterise Mead's approach as Man-society-Man and Macmurray's approach as Man-Community-Man.

"In the mutual, reciprocal conditioning" according to Pfuetze, "of two persons or groups we have only the raw materials of a unified harmonious moral world of trust and co-operation which can become the world of the Thou".<sup>73</sup> However, it only has the possibility of becoming the 'I-Thou' relationship. Pfuetze goes on to point out

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71. Pfuetze, Paul, The Social Self (Bookman Associates: New York, 1954) hereafter cited as SS, p.264

72. SS p.264

73. Ibid

that: "The ideals and interests and claims of persons and groups clash with one another."<sup>74</sup> How then can one expect co-operation or even ethical decisions to be made. The only solution seems to be the acknowledgement of a third and higher claim. In the case of Macmurray, although he did not speak directly to this particular problem, one can assume that he would consider the Other as the third and higher claim. The Generalised Other, although loosely associated with the Idea of God in its most universalised form, is also closely associated with the idea of community, which means that community can easily be assumed to be the third and higher claim.

The difference between Buber's and Macmurray's conception of God in terms of community can be best understood by comparing their conception of the universal community. For Buber a universal or general claim for a source of sanction, i.e. norm-authority, upon which "human relations can be built upon into universal community, is God, the infinite personal Thou, and that only in knowledge of and right response to the External Thou can man become fully man and human community built."<sup>75</sup> However, Macmurray's criteria for a universal or world-community is different. "If there is to be a world-community, it can only be based upon a universal respect for all man; on a deep reverence for personality. It is the function of religion to create and maintain this reverence..."<sup>76</sup>

Macmurray's anthropocentric as opposed to theocentric approach is evident with its subsequent preclusion of God's position.

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74. Ibid

75. SS p.265

76. Macmurray, John, "Religion in Transformation" This Changing World ed. Brumwell, J.R.M. (George Routledge and Sons: London, 1945) p.260

Since Macmurray's approach is heterocentric as opposed to theocentric does this lead one to believe that Macmurray's heterocentric and communal ethical theory is nothing more than an altruism based upon the third and higher claim of community? One must find out if altruism fits with the communal category of ethics as presented by Macmurray. Is heterocentrism a form of altruism or at the very least does it show certain altruistic characteristics?

Altruism is normally contrasted with egoism. Altruism is the desire to live in a certain way that is characterised by a desire for the good of others.<sup>77</sup> Altruism is not self-interest, but interest in others. Macmurray considered negative modes of morality to be egocentric and opposed to this with his heterocentric mode of communal morality. One can immediately see that within the general framework of egoism versus altruism Macmurray would have to classify the communal as part of the altruistic camp. An altruistic bias in our moral behaviour is one that requires us to consider the interests and inclinations of another in place of our own.<sup>78</sup> Macmurray stated that: "The centre of reference for the agent, when he seeks to act rightly, is always the personal Other."<sup>79</sup> The primary consideration of Macmurray is for the other and the primary concern for altruism is the other.

There are several serious objections to altruism. J.J.C. Smart has pointed out that: "Pure altruism cannot be made the basis of a universal moral discussion in that it would lead different people

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77. EP Volume 2 p.466

78. Downie, R.S. and Telfer, Elizabeth, Respect for Persons (George Allen and Unwin Ltd.: London, 1979) p.81

79. PR p.122

to different, perhaps incompatible, courses of action, even though the circumstances are identical."<sup>80</sup> Smart pointed out the example of two men trying to let each other through the same door, which of course leads to neither going through the door. Smart concluded that: "If we can make a man try to be an altruist he may succeed as far as acquiring generalised benevolence."<sup>81</sup> This will only lead to one sliding back into the morass of goal seeking with benevolence becoming the goal sought. Altruism does not present a clear third alternative from teleology and deontology.

Ayn Rand makes several telling criticisms about altruism that can be also applied to heterocentrism. Rand contends that two separate moral questions are lumped together by the altruists: "(1) what are values? (2) who should be the beneficiary of values? Altruism substitutes the second for the first; it evades the task of defining a code of moral values, thus leaving man, in fact, without moral guidance."<sup>82</sup> Macmurray does confuse the other as the source of value with the other as the receiver of values, which makes the other the value itself, where in fact it should be the beneficiary of the values.

Rand equates altruism with collectivism. Reinhold Niebuhr was also aware of this connection between collectivism and altruism. On the social level Niebuhr pointed out that: "Patriotism is a high

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80. Smart, J.J.C. An Outline of a System of Utilitarian Ethics (Melbourne University Press: Melbourne, 1961) p.21

81. Ibid

82. Rand, Ayn, The Virtue of Selfishness: A New Concept of Egoism (The New American Library of World Literature, Inc.: New York 1964) p.viii

83. Ibid p.80



form of altruism, when compared with lesser and more parochical loyalties; but from an absolute perspective is simply another form of selfishness."<sup>84</sup> The collectivistic element in altruism ultimately leads back to the egocentric view of the individual. Such an egocentric view of the individual is contrary to Macmurray's avowed intention.

Nagel was cognizant of the direct link between altruism and self-interest. "Altruistic reasons are parasitic upon self-interested ones; the circumstances of the lives of others which altruism requires us to consider as circumstances which those others already have reason to consider from a self-interested point of view."<sup>85</sup> Heterocentrism also suffers from the same weakness in that one must either reason in a self-interested way in terms of the other or even worse follow the self-interested reasons and needs as the other expresses or communicates them. Self-interest is removed only one place away from the individual consequently the self-interest of the other becomes central. Macmurray did in a way try to deal with the underlying self-interest that seems to be inherent in heterocentrism, but this is somewhat ambiguous since Macmurray assumes that the other and not self-interest should be the basis for morality. However, can one really have any form of heterocentrism that does not have an element of self-interest?

It is obvious that Macmurray's ternary approach to ethics is neither unique nor singular, since it resembles in many ways the ethical systems of others before and after him. Also when one attempts to extrapolate and interpret Macmurray's third alternative

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84. Niebuhr, Reinhold, Moral Man and Immoral Society (Charles Scribner's Sons: New York, 1960) p.48, hereafter cited as MMIS

85. Nagel, Thomas, The Possibility of Altruism (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1975) p.16

to ethics we find that Macmurray's concentration upon community and the 'I-Thou' dialogue might cause one to assume that ethics can be reduced to altruism with all its inherent difficulties. Not only does Macmurray's heterocentric and communal alternative fail to wrestle with the problems of the collective impulse of the group as does his concept of community, but Macmurray depends upon community as the Other to be the mediating authority for claims. Macmurray's dependence upon the community as the source of authority for higher claims means that there is no supreme authority in one community's conflict with another. The morals governing conflict between groups has no norm-authority beyond the analogy of personal relations as applied to group activities. Macmurray also confuses the other as the beneficiary of values with the concept of the other as the source of value. The source of value must be God and not the other, i.e. one other individual, or the generalised other, i.e. the community.

#### Intention

There is one motif that runs throughout Macmurray's ethic that has only lightly been touched upon so far. This was Macmurray's insistence that intention is central to any moral decision. The concept of intention is central to Macmurray's definition of morality. Intention is not simply a matter of morality, but is something that gives direction to action. It is not part of the act. The act in order to be morally good must be intended, however intention does not constitute alone the only criteria for a morally good act according to Macmurray.

Macmurray was certainly not the first individual to make use of the term intention both as a determining factor in the morality of the act and in the anticipation of the act. However, it must be pointed out that the use of the word 'intention' in the way Macmurray

and others such as the phenomenologists have used it stems from an error. An intentio is supposed to be a certain form of representation.<sup>86</sup> Because of Brentano's use of the word 'intentional' in his doctrine of mental events, which held that all mental events are directed on objects, one uses the term intentional in the sense of being directed towards an object. Husserl and others have proceeded in the wake of this error.<sup>87</sup> Abailard was one of the first to hold that the notion or motive (or intention) underlay ethical thought. Abailard believed that a right action consisted of a rational assessment of the situation leading to a proper management of human tendencies.<sup>88</sup> The idea of intention or motive as enunciated by Abailard meant that we call an intention good, because it is right in itself and an action good because it issues from good intention.<sup>89</sup>

Macmurray's conception of intention closely resembles the conception of intention as expressed by the phenomenologists.<sup>90</sup> Macmurray understood intention as a conscious act. Husserl also understood the intention of an act to be conscious. Not only did Husserl consider consciousness to be important in his conception of intentionality, but also that the other is part of the very essence of the conscious act and therefore part of the intention.<sup>91</sup> A point of view that is in direct agreement with Macmurray. Husserl distin-

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86. Kneale, William, "Intentionality and Intensionality" The Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume (1968) XLII p.74

87. Ibid p.75

88. McCallum, J. Ramsey, Abailard's Ethics (Basil Blackwell: Oxford, 1935) p.3

89. Ibid p.46

90. Vos, op. cit., p.229

91. Kwant, Remy C. The Phenomenological Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty (Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh, PA, 1963) p.154

guished between the intentionality of the act, which is that of our judgements and of those occasions in which we voluntarily take up a position, and the 'operative intentionality' which produces the natural unity of the world and our life.<sup>92</sup> The conception of direction was an essential part of Husserl's conception of intentionality.<sup>93</sup> Husserl also underlined the importance of the object. The conscious act is seen as being between the two poles, i.e. 'noesis' and 'noema' which is the subject and object.<sup>94</sup>

Since, Macmurray considered intention as direction it is conceivable that one can choose the wrong goal and an incorrect means and still have a good intention in the sense of direction. However, the concept of intention can either concentrate upon the object of intention such as the other in the 'I-Thou' dialogue or the consequences of the action. Macmurray considered the other as being the important object and the consequences of the act as secondary, because if one concentrates upon the objective of the event one can easily overlook the other and concentrate upon the goal alone.

Intention for Macmurray represented a direction, but he did not fully define what an intention is, beyond the fact that it is a particular rational, conscious and discriminatory experience. Although one might accept that these are the properties of intention, one still is faced with the basic question 'what is intention?'. Anthony Kenny recognised that the intention is a statement about the future, but

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92. Merleau-Ponty, M. Phenomenology of Perception (Routledge & Kegan Paul: London, 1962) trans. Colin Smith p.xvii

93. Husserl, Edmund, Idea: A General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology (George Allen & Unwin Ltd.: London, 1931) trans. W.R. Boyce Gibson, p.121f

94. Kwant, op. cit., pp.154-155

Kenny also interpreted it as a command uttered to oneself.<sup>95</sup>

Another possible explanation or exegesis of intention is that intention is an inner experience. This explanation is one that was favoured by Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein believed that one does not remember the words used, "but one can precisely remember the intention ..."<sup>96</sup> Wittgenstein considered the intention of a person as something more than words, i.e. an inner experience or feeling. This is not out of step with Macmurray's desire to make intention something other than a cause or end of an action. However, one must question whether one is always and completely aware of intention. Does one need to have an explicit thought about the event as something which will be contrasted to a thought of the event as something which might merely happen? Even though one may not have explicitly been aware of what one was doing one can still feel that one had acted intentionally.<sup>97</sup> There is more to intention than its particular, conscious, rational and discriminatory elements. Intention is an inner feeling of the individual. Intention may not always be fully conscious or fully rational.

Macmurray has overlooked the inner experience of intention. Intention may well be an individual's inner need to help another person in terms of Macmurray's ethic. Only the individual can really determine that he intended to do something, since he sometimes is not fully aware of the consequences of his actions or the effect this act will have upon the other, even though he recognises that there was a definite inner experience.

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95. Kenny, Anthony, Action, Emotion and Will (Routledge & Kegan Paul: London, 1963) p.220

96. Wittgenstein, Ludwig, Philosophical Investigation (Basil Blackwell: Oxford, 1953) trans. G.E.M. Anscombe p.165 (section 644-8)

97. Zink, Sidney, The Concepts of Ethics (Macmillan & Co. Ltd.: London, 1962) p.265

Macmurray's conception of intention as being separate from motive is helpful and adequate. His assumption that intention is necessary for morality is valuable, but one should not try to accurately define intention in terms of being only a conscious and rational act. However, by stating that the intention is a necessary condition of the individual's moral judgement does help to clarify morality.<sup>98</sup>

Intention is not precise and is not easily or always open to empirical judgements. Intention is a matter for the individual and is rarely a matter for the group. Macmurray by assuming intention to be primarily in terms of the other, i.e. the other as the object of intention, has by-passed the importance of the Kierkegaardian concept of the 'single one' in intention. By trying to make intention accessible to another, Macmurray has reduced intention to the rational and conscious. However, intention is also an 'inner experience' that is not easily communicated to the other.

#### A Critique of the Communal Definition of Morality

The major motif in Macmurray's definition of morality is the community, which is operative in his definition of morality in terms of the 'I-Thou' dialogue as well as group harmony. Pittinger in his review of Persons in Relation levels the criticism at Macmurray's activist, personalised, relational philosophy which is supposedly in agreement with the Bible's point-of-view, that it is in reality too simplistic.<sup>99</sup> Macmurray's insistence upon only a communal view of man and consequently only a communal view of morality does seem to over-simplify religion, selfhood and morality. There is something more than the community.

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98. D'Arcy, Eric, Human Acts: An Essay in their Moral Evaluation (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1963) p.129

99. Pittinger, W. Norman, "Book Review of Persons in Relation" in Anglican Theological Review XLVI (1962) p.239



Macmurray centred his interpretation of morality upon the harmony of the community. Strawson in his essay "Social Morality and the Individual Ideal", concluded that seeing morality in terms of the expectations of behaviour on the part of the members of a group was "a minimal interpretation of morality".<sup>100</sup> Strawson not only saw the expectations of the community to be the minimal interpretation of morality, but the resulting obligations and norms or rules as only a part of the minimal obligation. Strawson admitted that this approach is a "useful analytical idea", but he went on to call for a universal approach to all moral rules or norms.<sup>101</sup>

Macmurray's approach to morality could easily and dangerously be reduced to the obligation to reciprocate or to react to the expectation of the other. The vague line between the teleological and the relational is also illustrated by Barnsley pointing out that: "The obligation to reciprocate is not always an ethical one-- it may be good manners to do so. Most Christians, for example would reject the idea that the source of obligation to one's neighbour lies in what he or the other will do in return."<sup>102</sup> What needs to be underlined is the intrinsic and unique value of the individual which of course includes the intrinsic and unique value of the other.

For anyone to leave open the possibility that the group in any form should become the source of moral authority is a questionable manoeuvre. Reinhold Niebuhr wrote in his famous work Moral Man and Immoral Society that: "The

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100. Strawson, P.F. "Social Morality and Individual Ideal" in The Definition of Morality by Wallace, Gerald and Walker, A.D.M. (Methuen & Co. Ltd., : London, 1970) p. 103

101. Ibid

102. Barnsley, John H. The Social Reality of Ethics: The Comparative Analysis of Moral Codes (Routledge & Kegan Paul: London and Boston, 1972) p. 140

more the moral problem is shifted from the relations of individuals to the relations of groups and collectives, the more the preponderance of the egoistic impulses over the social ones is established."<sup>103</sup> Niebuhr called for a compromise between self-assertion and the control of the group.<sup>104</sup> Niebuhr called for a balance between the purely communal and the purely individualistic, i.e. a combination of the relational approach of Mead and the single one of Kierkegaard or if you will a combination of the Whiteheadian interpretation of religion and Macmurray's interpretation of religion.

George Simmel wrote that:

The mass does not know the dualism of egotistic and altruistic impulses, a dualism that often renders the individual helpless and makes him embrace a vacuum. Law, the first and essential condition of the life of the groups, large and small, has aptly been called the 'ethical minimum'.<sup>105</sup>

Macmurray by intimately connecting morals with the community has overlooked the major problems that have been recognised by many other thinkers writing about group morality, e.g. that group morality, no matter what type of group, tends to be in terms of the ethical minimum. Simmel pointed out that only the individual can feel the pull of egotism and altruism. Without the individual's altruistic impulse the heterocentric may not come into being. The connection of morality with the community at the expense of the individual must ultimately have a distorting effect.

Macmurray has made the community and not society the centre of any ethical and moral judgement. However, does this not impose a good deal of constraint upon most decisions which are made outside of the community, which is basically a very limited sphere of activity.

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103. MMIS p.262

104. Ibid pp.261-262

105. Simmel, Georg, The Sociology of Georg Simmel trans. and ed. by Kurt H. Wolff (Collier-Macmillan Ltd.: London, 1950) pp.27-28

Harris in his book review of Persons in Relation noted that there are problems connected with Macmurray's interpretation of human groups in terms of community and society. "Indeed one must ask how, even in a smaller community extending beyond the family group, harmonious activities could be established without some body or general recognised rules decided upon, and when necessary altered with changing circumstances by some commonly acknowledged procedure."<sup>106</sup> Harris feels that the only way that the tension between intimacy and inclusiveness in a group may be solved even in the community, must be in terms of rules. Harris goes on to reason that even among a community of friends that some method of interpretation of rules and reconciliation methods must be found. Harris ends by concluding that: "In short, in any community larger than a family, elements of government must be present."<sup>107</sup> The community as the only or primary moral unit is very limited and gives a weak foundation for a general ethical system.

Harris noted that one "cannot realise community in practice nor can we dispense with it".<sup>108</sup> Macmurray's conception of morality is centred around the concept of harmony within the community as well as the 'I-Thou' relation. However, one will not only have a difficult time defining the area in which one operates in terms of morality, but also one will have difficulty in isolating any group that can be said to be truly a community based on something besides blood relationships. As has been noted, Macmurray's conception of community is confusing and not completely clear. Consequently any hope of identifying the particular group on which one should model one's moral behaviour is unlikely. The morals of any group, except

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106. Harris, Errol E. "Review of Persons in Relation" in The International Philosophical Quarterly Vol.2 No.3 (1962) p.480

107. Ibid

108. Ibid

the family or any other group that is severely limited, is based upon only some elements of the community that may be seen to exist in any social group. Even worse one must also assume that real moral decisions are not possible except in only a small number of cases and that in most social decisions, in Macmurray's use of the term, there is no such thing as a true moral choice. Since one does not always operate in terms of community one does not always have the possibility of making an adequate heterocentric decision. Harris noted this inconsistency when he wrote that:

A similar difficulty arises in Macmurray's moral theory. He asserts that the full character and ultimate condition of human action is the positive relation between (at least two) persons, and this is expressed in love and symbolically in the rite of communion in religious ritual. But in any wide society involving large numbers of persons such direct positive relationships, with the best will in the world, proves to be impossible. Indirect, negative relations are inevitable in such a society which always contains elements of community (positive relationships) but can never, as a whole, be a community.<sup>109</sup>

True community becomes an unrealisable ideal under these conditions which means that true or adequate morality is only an ideal, but Macmurray has criticised those philosophers that depended upon the ideal and have reduced things to the status of appearance. Macmurray did not seem to overcome this defect with his dependence upon community as a pivotal point for moral philosophy.

The only solution to this problem lies in either abandoning the concept of community as the centre of morality, which would of course go against the vast majority of Christian thinking about ethics or a realignment of Macmurray's definition of community. Rader suggests that: "The right solution is to recognise the interdependence of the great and small community. It would be vain to

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109. Harris, Errol E. "Review of John Macmurray's Persons in Relation" The Philosophical Review Volume LXXII (1963) p.140

attempt a fundamental reconstruction of human life by operating only at the local level."<sup>110</sup> A definition that might be broad enough to serve our purpose is that of E.C. Lindeman. "A community is any process of social interaction which gives rise to a more intensive or extensive attitude and practice of interdependence, co-operation, collaboration and unification."<sup>111</sup>

One must be careful, however, not only to make sure that the definition of community does not warp in some way the definition and ideas of morality, but also not to connect too closely the concept of morality with the concept of community. Strawson reminds us of

... the diversity of communities to which we may be said to belong, and the diversity of systems of moral demand which belong to them. To a certain extent though to an extent which we must not exaggerate, the systems of moral relationships into which we enter are a matter of choice — or at least a matter in which there are alternative possibilities; and different systems of moral demand are variously well or ill adapted to the ideal pictures of life.<sup>112</sup>

Another weakness that is inherent in too closely connecting the community with morality is that one finds oneself open to a collective bias without the counteractive force of individualism. Collectivism is always a danger in any moral situation of more than two persons. "Society finds ways to impose its values and enforce its will upon individuals."<sup>113</sup> "The Christian doctrine of man-in-community emphasises that man becomes human only in personal relations, but that the person is a unique self, never simply a fragment of

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110. Rader, Melvin, Ethics and the Human Community (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, : London, 1964) p.389

111. Ibid p.390

112. Strawson, op. cit., p.115

113. DCE p.60



society."<sup>114</sup> The problem lies in placing the person in such a position that the tension of collectivism and individualism do not overpower one another. Macmurray's approach does not seem to protect completely the individual from the encroachment of collectivism. The individual must be interested in morality outside the confines of the group. The group's morality should not in any way control the individual's moral decision, but it should guide the individual.

The individual alone must stand upon his own feet and make the decision. The communal conception of man combines with the communal conception of morality to make morality a product of the group and reduce morality to a mere response or reaction to the other members of the group with nothing making this action more than just a reaction to the expectations of the other person and the group of other persons.

One needs to find a balance between the individual sense of morality and the moral community or one might be in danger of falling into the morass of collectivism. Strawson notes that the interplay between the individual ethical ideal and social obligation is an intricate one.<sup>115</sup> Strawson recognised the connection between the individual's need to have a moral ideal and to exist in a moral community, however, Strawson does not attempt to limit the meaning of community.<sup>116</sup>

One cannot underestimate the individual's impact in the moral equation, since without a proper balance between the individual and the community one might tend to fall into the collective morass.

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114. Ibid

115. Strawson, op. cit., pp.106-107

116. Ibid pp.114-115



Macmurray seemed to conclude that morality is a matter of community although he did not completely dismiss the individual. Niebuhr pointed out that the highest point at which a group might aspire is one of wise self-interest, whereas the individual is able to transcend the group and also transcend the morality of a group, which enables the individual to attain a higher form of morality.<sup>117</sup> Nietzsche also thought that the individual was important to morality. Nietzsche wrote in The Will to Power that: "All altruism is the prudence of the private man; societies are not mutually altruistic."<sup>118</sup> It must be recognised that the community is only a factor in morality and not morality itself. One can consequently object to Macmurray's term communal when applied to the only form of true or positive morality. Macmurray starts with the heterocentric and its accompanying demand for altruism between individuals but he seems to lose sight of the individual's isolated moral striving in favour of a completely communal view of man's search for morality.

Walgrave pointed out that:

The source of authentic morality is the conscience, i.e. the free acceptance of a call to generosity and unselfishness. The object of this unselfish existence is the person. This call is rooted in the autonomous value of the person as such, a value of which we are aware as soon as we express this call in our life, in every genuine encounter, in every genuine dialogue.<sup>119</sup>

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117. Niebuhr, Reinhold, The Self and The Dramas of History, (Faber and Faber Ltd.: London, 1956) p.24

118. Nietzsche, Friedrich, The Will to Power: An Attempted Transvaluation of all Values (.T.N. Foulis: Edinburgh and London, 1910) trans. Ludovici, Anthony M. Volume II p.183

119. Walgrave, John H. Persons and Society: A Christian View (Duquesne University Press: Pittsburgh, PA., 1965) pp.35-36

The two aspects of morality are the person and the person in dialogue. Neither the person nor the person in dialogue can be overlooked when investigating the nature of morality.

The Christian centre of morality lies around the concept of agape or overpowering and universal love. Buber has been criticised for reducing love to a relational matter.<sup>120</sup> Macmurray also seems to have reduced love to a matter of interhuman relationships. Fellowship, not God, seems to be the basic ingredient in love for Macmurray. However, this is a direct contradiction of the Christian ethic.

Bonhoeffer's thinking before his death, which went beyond his Ethics, tended to discard some of the apparatus of traditional 'religion' and certain images of God. Recent theologians, that have followed in the footsteps of Bonhoeffer, have tended to reduce Christian ethics to nothing more than the interpersonal relations, which was not Bonhoeffer's intent.<sup>121</sup> Macmurray also seems to have reduced the Christian ethic to a matter of interpersonal relations. The area that warrants investigation is a comparison of Macmurray's approach to morality and the Christian concept of agape.

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120. Evans, Donald, "Love, Situations and Rules" in Outka, G.H. Norm and Christian Ethics (SCM Press Ltd.: London, 1968) p.376

121. Olafson, Frederick A. Ethics and Twentieth Century Thought (Prentice-Hall, Inc.: Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1973) p.37

CHAPTER 14

An Examination and Critique of Macmurray's  
Approach to Christian Ethics

The focus of this study is Macmurray's understanding of community and the affect of this understanding upon his interpretation of Christian ethics. Macmurray dealt extensively with Christian ethics in two of his works. His first analysis of Christian ethics is to be found in the work The Clue to History in the Chapter entitled "The Works of Jesus". The second analysis of Christian ethics is to be found in the article "Prolegomena to a Christian Ethic".

In the article "Prolegomena to a Christian Ethic" Macmurray presented his basic thesis about ethics. Firstly, Macmurray outlined his ternary approach to ethics, by introducing the now familiar three modes of apperception, which include the two negative modes of apperception, which represent the aesthetic approach to ethics (teleological approach) and the pragmatic approach to ethics (deontological approach). Macmurray limited the term moral to the positive mode of apperception, i.e. the third category or communal category of ethics, which perceives things only in terms of human co-operation motivated by love which he terms either fellowship or community. The concept of community is for Macmurray the defining or essential factor in his interpretation of the positive mode of apperception. Macmurray noted that: "The positive apperception, because it provides a motive for realising personal relations of trust and confidence, is itself constitutive of fellowship in community."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Macmurray rejected the two negative modes of apperception because of their detrimental affect upon fellowship. "The two negative apperceptions tend to the destruction of fellowship; as they are inherently self-centred."<sup>2</sup> Macmurray's approach

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1. Macmurray, John, "Prolegomena to a Christian Ethic", Scottish Journal of Theology, (1956) IX, p.9, hereafter cited as PCE

2. PCE p.9

to Christian ethics is consequently centred upon the concept of fellowship or community.

Macmurray defined "the good life" in terms of fellowship. "The good life is neither a life which exhibits a harmonious unity of structure, nor one which conforms to certain eternal principles. It is the life of fellowship and actions are right as they contribute to the creation, the extension and the maintenance of fellowship."<sup>3</sup> Macmurray then pointed out that since fellowship is good that: "Christian ethics cannot be egocentric, as the negative types of ethic are."<sup>4</sup> Thus setting his interpretation of Christian ethics firmly within the field of heterocentric ethics, i.e. the relational, Macmurray rejected the concept of the 'isolated-I' and favoured the 'I-Thou' conception of man when speaking of Christian ethics. This is in line with his thinking about ethics in general. "It would be more correct to say that from the Christian point of view the individual has no value in himself as an individual, but only in relation to God and therefore in relation to his fellows."<sup>5</sup> Macmurray has unerringly rejected the individual when separated from the Other. Man's value comes only partially from relationships, since a totally relational approach undermines the intrinsic value of the individual. Macmurray also assumes that man's relationship with God resembles man's relationships with others. However, the 'I-Thou' relationship with God is eternal and ideal, while one's relationships with man are only temporal and partial. Macmurray went on to note that: "In any personal relation the bond of unity lies in the fact that we behave to one another in the way that expresses our care for one another."<sup>6</sup> The centre of

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3. PCE p.11

4. PCE p.11

5. PCE p.11

6. PCE p.12

Macmurray's ethic or the touchstone of Macmurray's ethic is man's relationship with man, and through this relationship man can confront God.

Macmurray has firmly asserted that the nature of ethics is anthropocentric. Macmurray identified Jesus' ethic with "his realisation of the nature of human existence".<sup>7</sup> Macmurray believed that most people differentiate between the apocalyptic and the ethical. The ethical is reduced to the spiritual. "It sets before us an ideal of human conduct. It reveals how we ought to behave. It provides us with a theory of the good life."<sup>8</sup> The apocalyptic is "about this world, and what will happen to it in the end".<sup>9</sup> However, Macmurray refused to differentiate between the apocalyptic and the ethical. Macmurray saw the ethical in terms of man's activities. The relation between 'the ethic' and 'the apocalyptic' in the teachings of "Jesus is the same as the relation between theory and prediction in science".<sup>10</sup> Macmurray went on to note that: "The one is the basis of the other, and the truth of the ethic is manifested, and can only be manifested, in the realisation of the prediction which it makes possible, which, in fact, is its meaning."<sup>11</sup> The lack of differentiation reveals firstly that Macmurray could not separate ethics from this world, and consequently was forced to reduce the ideal to nothing more than a prediction. Secondly, this reveals again the already suspected teleological under-current in Macmurray's thinking; this despite his supposed rejection of the ethics of 'goal-seeking'.

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7. CH p.82

8. CH p.84

9. CH p.84

10. CH p.87

11. CH p.87



### Ethics as Anthropology

Macmurray in his interpretation of Christian ethics applied the same communal criterion as he has in his work on general ethics. Macmurray reduced ethics to a communal, personal set of relations which determines and is the goal of the individual's search for an ideal. Ethics for Macmurray threatens to be reduced to an examination of co-operative human activity.

Macmurray's identification of the ethical and the apocalyptic led him into making several revealing conclusions. Macmurray noted that: "what is called the 'ethic' of Jesus is, in fact, his anthropology. It is his formulation of the principles governing the behaviour of personal life."<sup>12</sup> Macmurray went on to state that: "The 'apocalyptic' is simply the prediction about the future development of the personal life in the world which follows from these principles."<sup>13</sup> Macmurray considered the anthropology to be a 'religious anthropology' and the prediction to be a 'religious prediction'.<sup>14</sup> Macmurray quite correctly noted that Jesus abandoned any ethical form in terms of 'ought' statements. Jesus for Macmurray avoided deliberately the ethic form without abandoning ethics. Jesus fulfilled in this way his mission as religious genius.

Macmurray's interpretation of Jesus' ethic revolved around man's nature and in particular the relational aspect of his nature. However, this limits any interpretation of ethics to an anthropocentric approach. Even though the anthropocentric approach does comfortably accommodate the heterocentric approach of Macmurray it does not completely or accurately represent the ethic that Jesus

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12. CH p.88

13. CH p.88

14. CH p.88

proposed. However, Macmurray's understanding of the self in terms of the 'I-Thou' and the accompanying rejection of the 'isolated-I' makes any interpretation by necessity a matter of man and man, which might well overshadow the encounter of God and man and in doing so threaten man's unique and intrinsic value. Ethics is more than anthropology and man's encounter with God is more than an extension of man's relationship with man, nor can God's relation to man be extended to man's relation with man.

Vos in his comparison of H. Richard Niebuhr and John Macmurray made a revealing division between the thinkers: "Niebuhr makes his anthropology subservient to his theology, while Macmurray makes theology subservient to his anthropology."<sup>15</sup> This dominance of theology by anthropology must inevitably affect Macmurray's conception of not only religion but also his conception of ethics and in particular Christian ethics. Does Macmurray's approach lead to the deification of the communal life of man?

Macmurray in his summary of Marx's criticism of Feuerbach wrote that: "Marx said that Feuerbach deified the love-life of man."<sup>16</sup> Has Macmurray in some ways followed in the footsteps of Feuerbach by deifying the love-motivated, personal relationship or if you will the extended form of the 'I-Thou', i.e. the personal 'community'.

Macmurray certainly followed in the footsteps of Buber, but there is also reason to believe that some of Macmurray's thinking is foreshadowed by Ludwig Feuerbach. Feuerbach advanced the humanist interpretation that: "God is a hypostatisation or unconscious

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15. Vos, Kenneth Duane, "The Contribution of Edmond Cahn, H. Richard Niebuhr and John Macmurray to the Ethics of Responsibility" (unpublished Doctoral Thesis: Columbia University, 1972) p.245

16. CS p.117

symbol of the human community", which resembles Macmurray's universal Other. "The theistic interpretation, later formulated by Martin Buber (1878 - ) is that the fulfilment of community requires allegiance to God."<sup>17</sup> Feuerbach saw the being of man as existing "only in community, in the unity of man with man -- a unity that rests solely on the distinction between I and Thou".<sup>18</sup> Feuerbach's transition is from theism to humanism. Love is reduced to a human bond and the community becomes the basis of human existence. The essence of religion is the relation of "man to his own nature", but not towards self but towards that of another.<sup>19</sup> Martin Buber was greatly influenced by the ideas of Feuerbach and he hailed Feuerbach's doctrine of community as "the Copernican revolution of modern thought".<sup>20</sup> Barth wrote about Feuerbach that he held that: "Only the distinction of the I and Thou is real. And it is precisely in the experienced unit of this distinction that man's essence is to be found."<sup>21</sup> For Feuerbach the being of man is "achieved only in community, in the union of man with man a unity depends on the reality of the difference between the I and Thou...".<sup>22</sup> Feuerbach fits God into the mold. "Man with man, the unity of I and Thou is God!"<sup>23</sup> Feuerbach is not denying God or the validity of theology, but he is denying the existence of an

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17. Rader, Melvin, Ethics and the Human Community (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, London, 1964) p.423

18. Ibid

19. Ibid p.424

20. Ibid p.425

21. Barth, Karl, From Rousseau to Ritschl trans. of Die Protestantische Theologie Im 19. Jahrhundert (11 chapters) trans. by Brian Cozens (SCM Press Ltd.: London, 1952) p.356, hereafter cited as FRTR

22. Barth, Karl, Theology and the Church trans. Louie P. Smith (SCM Press Ltd.: London, 1962) p.220, hereafter cited as TC

23. Ibid

abstract divine Being which is divorced from man's nature. God's nature is reduced to man's nature. Anthropology becomes the only true study for theology.<sup>24</sup> Feuerbach in The Essence of Christianity stated that: "The consciousness of the world is mediated for the I through the consciousness of the Thou. Hence man is the God of man!"<sup>25</sup> Feuerbach concluded in The Essence of Religion that: "Theology is anthropology, that is to say in the object of religion in what we call Theos in Greek and Gott in German, nothing is specified except the essence of man."<sup>26</sup>

It is glaringly obvious that reducing theology to anthropology means that the knowledge of God is nothing more than the knowledge of man. Such a system leans towards the deification of man and finds its logical conclusion in the Superman of Nietzsche and August Comte's religion of humanity.<sup>27</sup> Martin Buber tried to overcome this difficulty by identifying the relation of man with man at its deepest level with the relation to the eternal Thou.<sup>28</sup> Buber certainly recognised the danger of too closely identifying anthropology with theology. Macmurray certainly has not been as careful in his differentiation between theology and anthropology.

John A.T. Robinson in his well known work Honest to God noted that the Christian Humanism of Macmurray was similar to that of Feuerbach in his identification of God and man.<sup>29</sup> Macmurray certainly did not clearly separate theology from anthropology; in fact Macmurray went as far as to identify Christian ethics with anthropology. This identification can be detected in his statements about fellowship and religion.<sup>30</sup> Macmurray defined both religion and ethics in terms

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24. FRTR p.356

25. TC p.221

26. Ibid p.223

27. Robinson, John A.T. Honest to God (SCM Press Ltd: London, 1963) p.50

28. Reader op. cit., p.426

29. Robinson op. cit., p.51

of fellowship, i.e. in terms of man and the community of men. Such a close identification meant that one might easily question whether religion has a separate existence outside anthropology. However, is Christian ethics reducible to the relationships between men in the community, i.e. fellowship?

Barth was suspicious of an 'anthropological underpinning' to theology and saw it merely as an attempt to set up alongside the revelation of God a second human court to which one might appeal. Barth parted from Gogarten over this very issue.<sup>31</sup> Barth condemned Feuerbach's use of the 'I-Thou'.

Barth quoted Han Ehrerber's comment about Feuerbach:

'As a true child of his century, he was a man who 'did not know death' and who 'misunderstood evil'. Truly any man who knew that we all die, would know that the illusion of all illusions is the notion that the being of God is the being of man. Even if he held God to be a dream he would certainly leave him free of any identification with such as we.'<sup>32</sup>

Feuerbach tended according to Barth, when speaking of the individual or group "to make the two largely interchangeable, so that he speaks of individual man as if he were man in general, and thus dares to attribute divinity to the individual, is evidently connected with the fact that he does not seem sincerely and earnestly to have taken cognizance either must surely die."<sup>33</sup> Barth recognised the fragility of the individual and its affect upon the 'I-Thou' relationship. One needs to recognise the interdependence of the 'isolated-I' and the 'I-Thou'. Feuerbach's approach becomes suspect when one totally defines man in terms of the 'I-Thou'. Macmurray's tendency to

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31. Zahrnt, Heinz, The Question of God: Protestant Theology in the Twentieth Century (Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.: New York, 1966) p.58, hereafter cited as QG

32. TC p.235

33. FRTR pp.360-361

identify man in terms of the other makes his general approach suspect, since it overlooks the 'isolated-I' and also the individual's fragility and intrinsic worth. Macmurray's identification of ethics with the 'I-Thou' relation, which confines ethics to the field of anthropology, makes his whole approach limited and suspect as well as making his interpretation of Christian ethics suspect.

Tillich pointed out, that in the face of radical doubt and total meaninglessness, purely personal categories such as the 'I-Thou' and 'encounter' become inadequate. One needs the balancing factor of the transcendent, transpersonal presence of God.<sup>34</sup> One needs to admit that there are concrete and personal symbols for God, but one should admit that these are only symbols and should not look to them for the final answer, but to God as Being.

Macmurray, by defining religion and ethics in terms of the personal relationships between man and man, comes close to deifying communal activity, i.e. relationships and fellowship. By removing or understressing the mortality of man one can speak purely in terms of the relational, but man's mortality forces any ethical decision to be partially teleological. Macmurray by reducing God to a universal Other has set man's activities too closely to those of God. One needs to make the mystical unknowableness of God part of any assertion about religion and consequently about Christian ethics. Does not the limitation of Christian ethics to personal relations distort the ethical inquiry?

There seems to have been a widespread agreement that Christian faith is manifested in the 'I-Thou' relations, i.e. in the personal relationship with one's neighbour,<sup>35</sup> but this is not the only factor

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34. QG p.364

35. QG p.174



that needs to be taken into account. The problems begin to arise when one turns to the suprapersonal spheres of life such as politics, economics, technology, law, etc. One cannot exclude the suprapersonal field from the field of ethics nor can one dismiss or undervalue it by claiming that since it is impersonal one cannot make a 'moral' decision.

A communal view of ethics tends to focus all interest upon the interpersonal and interhuman relation,<sup>36</sup> while excluding the suprapersonal ethical question. Christian ethics has a serious stake in the transformation of nature and consequently it must not consider the technical mastery of nature to be morally neutral.<sup>37</sup> Macmurray's heterocentric approach considers man only in terms of man and not in terms of nature and the world. Macmurray has been criticised for personalising experience to such an extent that man's responsible relation to nature is denied.<sup>38</sup>

Thielicke labelled or offered three areas of ethical validity. Thielicke labelled these as man's relation to himself, the 'I-Thou' relation and the 'I-World' relation. Macmurray concentrated his attention upon the 'I-Thou' while overlooking the ethical decisions one must make when confronting such things as money, wisdom and power. Macmurray in concentrating upon the 'I-Thou' relation overlooked the way that man confronts himself and the accompanying questions that deal with the isolated self, for example one's own sexuality.<sup>39</sup>

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36. Piper, Otto A. Christian Ethics (Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd.: London, 1970) p.143

37. Ibid

38. Vos, op. cit., p.250

39. Thielicke, Helmut, Theological Ethics Vol.1 Foundations (Adam & Charles Black: London, 1966) pp.465-471

Melvin Rader has pointed out that: "Individuality pitted against community, is a dangerous half-truth, while community, if considered total and absolute, is no less delusory."<sup>40</sup> One should not think of man totally in terms of his relational aspects nor in terms of his individual or isolated aspects. Socially, i.e. the relational part of the personality, must presuppose the unique potential of every individual. If one thinks only in terms of the 'I-Thou', one is forced into thinking of other human beings as basically alike and the individuality of each as epiphenomenal. Consequently, Buber went out of his way to underline the uniqueness and totality of the individual in terms of the community.<sup>41</sup> If one only concentrates upon the sociality of man, then one's individuality becomes nothing more than numerical.<sup>42</sup>

One must attempt to do justice to the many sides of the person in that one needs to take into account the communal and the individual aspects of each human being. Max Scheler in the work On the Eternal in Man pointed out that: "The essence of the person is found in the fact that his whole spiritual being and activity is rooted both in individual reality and in membership in a community."<sup>43</sup> Christian ethics cannot just be concerned with that part of man that can be labelled communal. Christian ethics must view the person both in terms of the 'I-Thou' and the 'Isolated-I'.

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40. Rader op. cit., pp.299-289

41. Norton, David, Personal Destinies: A Philosophy of Ethical Individualism (Princeton University Press: Princeton, N.J., 1976) p.305

42. Ibid p.306

43. Scheler, Max, On the Eternal in Man (SCM Press Ltd: London, 1960) p.476

Any attempt to place man at the centre of religion or at the centre of ethics must be avoided. "The Christian religion as personal fellowship with God cannot tolerate man as the centre and focal point of ethic."<sup>44</sup> Bernard Haring goes on to point out that: "Viewed in the perspective of religion, the human person can be understood only from the standpoint of personal community and fellowship with God."<sup>45</sup> Ethics cannot be seen only in terms of the relational aspects of man, i.e. heterocentrically. Man cannot be seen only as a product of reciprocal relationships. A person is not reducible to mere fellowship; no matter how important fellowship is. Nor is God reducible to mere fellowship.

Paul Ramsey in Faith and Ethics differentiates between intrinsic and instrumental values, which shows the dependence of communal ethics' instrumental valuation upon the intrinsic valuation of the individual. When applied to ethics one can either view man in terms of his instrumental value and/or in terms of his intrinsic value. Man is more than something that is related to another; something more than a value which is determined and originates outside of himself. Ramsey makes the point that: "The instrumental values which a friend has as a friend is predicated upon his intrinsic value, the value which he has as a self-existent being."<sup>46</sup> Man's valuation of others and his concomitant ethical decision goes beyond the relational. Ramsey points out that: "The distinction between intrinsic and instrumental

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44. Haring, Bernard, "Essential Concepts of Moral Theology" in . Gustafson, James M. and Laney, James T. On Being Responsible: Issues in Personal Ethics (SCM Press Ltd.: London, 1969) p.92

45. Ibid

46. Ramsey, Paul, Faith and Ethics: The Theology of H. Richard Niebuhr (Harper and Brothers: New York, 1957) p.199 hereafter cited as FE

value is not absolute. Yet it seems to be necessary to make a fairly firm distinction between those values which depend entirely upon relations for their appearance and those which have their sufficient ground in non-relational existence."<sup>47</sup>

Man's ethical decisions about another human being depends upon not only relational aspects, but also non-relational aspects.

Ramsey avers that: "The paradoxical fact which must not be overlooked, is that only a being which had value in and for itself, in short a person, could satisfy the need for friendship."<sup>48</sup>

The relational<sup>a</sup> is not the only area in which ethics operates, ethics is more than the instrumental values of fellowship. Although Macmurray may have assumed that the person has intrinsic value, he failed to fully admit the consequences of such an assumption. Macmurray as has been noted, tended to overlook the unique aspects of the individual in his rush to take note of the relational and communal part of man, i.e. the 'I-Thou'. The 'isolated-I' tended to be overlooked. The 'isolated-I, however, is the focus of the individual's intrinsic value, i.e. non-relationally oriented value. One's humanity is not dependent upon others, but upon one's God given intrinsic value. One should not relate to other persons simply because he is mutually necessary or part of what one is, but because the other person is a person and is unique. Moreover, one should not only be motivated by the communal, but also by the theological realisation that the other person is the same in God's sight as oneself, which underscores the intrinsic humanity of a person. There is something beyond the communal that lays behind the intrinsic worth of the other, i.e. God. Heterocentrism is forced to make an 'instrumental'

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47. Ibid

48. Ibid

(a) see footnote 64 p. 243

value judgement, since one is constantly aware of one's dependence upon others. Christian ethics should not have an anthropological foundation, but a divine support, i.e. one that considers God as central to the ethical equation. Baring points out that: "The greatest hazard to genuine religious life arises from making man its centre, from viewing all divine worship and all communion with God primarily from the standpoint of the profit it brings man."<sup>49</sup>

By making ethical decisions revolve around the other, one makes fellowship the centre of any ethical decision without taking into account God's pivotal role in Christian ethics. By making relationships and/or the community central to the ethical equation one tends to overlook the intrinsic and unique value of the individual. Finally and most strikingly one must not substitute anthropological interpretations of man for theological interpretations of the world, nor can man be understood only in terms of the 'I-Thou' relation without the inclusion of the 'isolated-I'. Religion cannot be understood in terms of just its affect upon man. Macmurray has only presented a one-sided view of man and religion,

Macmurray's interpretation of ethics as a form of anthropology is at the very best debatable. Macmurray's rejection of the conception of the 'isolated-I' is connected with or is at least implied in his communal conception of God, which interprets God in terms of man, i.e. the universalised community. This means that any conception of God is dependent upon anthropological reasoning. Macmurray by assuming that the "individual has not value in himself as individual,"<sup>50</sup> assumes that all value is 'instrumental', i.e. in terms of what value it has for the other. God is reduced to being thought of in terms of

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49. Haring, op. cit., p.93

50. PCE p.11

his relation to man, thus the unique and intrinsic humanity of the individual is only supported by other men.

Communal Morality and the Teachings of Jesus

However, Macmurray's understanding of Christian ethics as a type of communal morality with its focus upon fellowship is not in agreement with other thinkers' interpretations of Jesus' approach to ethics. Reinhold Niebuhr noted that Jesus' ethic was a personal ethic. Nevertheless, Niebuhr considered the ethic to be a twofold ethic. "His (Jesus) ethic was an ethic of love, and it therefore implied social relationships. But it was an individual ethic in the sense that his chief interest was in the quality of life of an individual."<sup>51</sup> Ernest F. Scott in The Ethical Teaching of Jesus also noted that the balance between the individualism and collectivism in the ethic of Jesus was not weighed toward collectivism. Scott wrote that:

Jesus was the first who asserted the rights of human personality which are always in danger of being sacrificed to the interests of the group. He insisted that men are accountable to God, and must have room to serve him freely, and that the community whatever form it may assume must not crush the individual soul. It cannot be maintained then, that Jesus aimed at a social reorganization; much less that he made the social motive the primary one in the moral life. To be sure he insists continually on the need for service and sacrifice. He requires that as he came himself not to be ministered unto but to minister, so his followers must look to the good of others.<sup>52</sup>

Jesus certainly would not have recognised the motive of social or communal harmony. However, Jesus did not think just in terms of denying himself for a greater good and just in terms of other men.

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51. Niebuhr, Reinhold, Love and Justice (Meridian: Cleveland and New York, 1957) p.30

52. Scott, Ernest F. The Ethical Teaching of Jesus (Macmillan and Co., Limited: London, 1924) pp.59-60



"He (Jesus) thinks of life always in relation to God. Man's supreme duty is to serve God, and all his other duties have worth and reality, only as they are bound up with this one."<sup>53</sup> Jesus certainly understood the interdependence of all human beings. "He (Jesus) was aware that no action can be confined in its effects to the person who does it, and that a man can live his own true life only be the exercise of love, mercy, justice, helpfulness towards his fellows." However, Scott maintained that Jesus recognised "that in the last analysis man is not a social unit but a soul responsible to God, and that the sense of this must determine all his thought and action."<sup>54</sup>

If one reads closely the Great Commandment which appears in all of the synoptic Gospels, one is immediately struck by the order of the two commandments, and the relation of the two components of the Great Commandment. "And he said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbour as yourself'."<sup>55</sup> The first thing that is obvious is that the treatment of your fellow human beings is a consequence of your love for God. One's perception and approach to God is the determining factor in one's relationship with man. The first commandment is the necessary precursor to the second. To put it in the terms that Macmurray might use, one might say that the theocentric is the producer of the heterocentric idea. E. Clinton Gardner in Biblical Faith and Social Ethics asserted that: "There have been many attempts to reduce the two commandments of Jesus to a single requirement of love for God or love for neighbour. But, in the main, traditional Christianity

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53. Ibid p.61

54. Ibid p.61

55. Matthew 22: 37-39 Revised Standard Version (Collins' Clear-Type Press: New York and Glasgow, 1952)

has recognised that every such attempt inevitably misrepresents the essential nature of Christian love."<sup>56</sup> The Christian ethic rests upon the fact that: "God has taken the initiative in revealing his love to man."<sup>57</sup> Christian love is directed towards two objects. If one equates the love of God with the love of man then one could hold the view that fellowship was at the centre of Christian ethics. However, such a view would depend to a large extent upon a theology that was subordinated by anthropology. Christian love is directed according to Jesus' teaching in the Great Commandment towards two objects, not towards the one object or even towards two similar objects, since man's love for his neighbour differs from man's love of God.

Barth in his Dogmatics offers three explanations of the relation of the two distinct components of the Great Commandment.<sup>58</sup> Barth made the point that the "commandment to love our neighbour is that as God's children, and therefore as those who love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, we are summoned... ." Barth continued by maintaining that: "The second commandment has no other meaning and content apart from and in addition to: 'Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me bless his Holy name'."<sup>59</sup> Barth asserted that if one places the first and second commandment alongside one another that it is possible that instead of having one absolute demand; we have two absolute demands "in the strict and proper sense."<sup>60</sup> The second possibility is that: "There are not really two demands at all, but one absolute demand."<sup>61</sup> This

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56. Gardner, E Clinton, Biblical Faith and Social Ethics (Harper & Brothers: New York, 1960) p.174, hereafter cited as BFSE

57. BFSE p.175

58. Barth, Karl The Doctrine of the Word of God part of Church Dogmatics Vol. I Part II (T & F. Clark: Edinburgh, 1956) p. 401, hereafter cited as DOG

59. DOG p.401

60. DOG p.402

61. DOG p.402

would imply that love of God and love of neighbour are identical. The third possibility is that: "There is only the one absolute demand of love to God, and the demand of love to the neighbour approximates to it as the first and most important of the particular, relative and subordinate commands within which, as in Luther's catechism, the commandment to love God forms the real nerve and content, the commandment in the commandments and the commandment of all commandments."<sup>62</sup>

Barth rejected the first two alternatives because they are not exegetically legitimate. In the case of the first possibility, i.e. the assumption that there are two absolute commandments side by side, one would have to assume that one could or would in consequence love two Gods. The second solution, i.e. the one that regards the two loves as identical, leads to confusion since it makes God the neighbour and the neighbour God. "If we try to interpret love to God as love to the neighbour and love to the neighbour as love to God, we have to make certain anthropologico-theological presuppositions which are illegitimate because they cannot be based on the biblical witness to revelation, and are in fact contrary to it."<sup>63</sup> In order to regard the two loves as identical one would have to ascribe an inherent value firstly "to the neighbour as representing the human race,"<sup>64</sup> and secondly "to our relationship to him as the fulfillment of individual humanity, to the human thou, and therefore to the human ego in its relationship to the thou."<sup>65</sup> This value must be autonomous, and "therefore has to be brought into a more or less direct connection with God

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62. DOG p.402

63. DOG p.403

64. DOG p.403

65. DOG p.403

or with something divine."<sup>66</sup> Barth rejected the identification of man's fellowship with man with the fellowship of God with man. However, there are distinctive features to the love of God for man.

It is because of this twofold value, because of the self-based sanctity and dignity and glory both of man in himself and also of the fellowship between man and man as such, that according to this conception religion is also humanity and love to God is love to the neighbour (meaning love to man). Of course, it is usually more or less strongly emphasised that humanity must also be religion and love to man must also be love to God. But it is inevitable that the distinctive features of love to God which cannot be seen should be known and therefore necessarily determined by a love to man which is very much seen and supposedly known. Love to God is, then, quintessence and hypostasised expression of what we know in a concretely perceptible and practical form as love to man. Love to God is the idea, the supreme norm of this known love to man. But it is clear that in these circumstances love to God cannot be what it is in Holy Scriptures, the response of man to the being and activity of One who has first loved us. The converse, that true love to man must also be love to God, comes too late to be a real converse. The statement has no importance, if the real cardinal interpretative principle of love is in the preceding statement, that true love to God will have to be love to man. It is too late for love to God to be decisive and meaningful in the Biblical sense. There is no praise of the God who has first loved us, breaking forth in love to the neighbour. Instead, there is praise of the sanctity and dignity and glory of man, what a somewhat equivocal love for God created according to the likeness of this man. The meaning and place given by the Holy Scripture to love to God are quite different. Holy Scripture speaks of man always and exclusively from the standpoint of his sin and reconciliation. It addresses man only in the name of Jesus Christ. It does not, therefore, participate in this praise of man. As Scripture sees it, man as such has no dignity of his own, nor has the fellowship of man with man. What he is as an individual and in fellowship, he is under judgement and as a new creation of the love of God. The only humanity there is is this lost humanity, founded anew by the Word and Spirit of God, revealed in Jesus Christ and to be grasped in faith him Him. There is no humanity based on itself. If such a humanity has to be presupposed in order to identify love to God and love to the neighbour, then the identification cannot be made. Love to God in the sense of Holy Scripture, and this love to the neighbour, are opposites which mutually exclude each other.<sup>67</sup>

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66. DOG p.403

67. DOG pp.403-404

Barth is shy of any hint of an anthropological underpinning to man's love of neighbour. Barth prefers with reservations the third solution to the connection between the two commandments within the Great Commandment. Barth did seem to be aware of the dangers of subordinating the second commandment to the first. Barth did not wish to leave the impression that the third interpretation might convey the possibility that neighbour-love was a secondary decision, or a secondary consideration.<sup>68</sup>

Barth saw elements of truth in each of the three possible connections between the two commandments. The first solution, which assumes that both commandments are absolute, is correct in so far as both commandments are from the one God. There are two commandments but one absolute Lord, "so that they both have absolute significance for the same man as God has determined and without competing one with another."<sup>69</sup> The second solution is correct in so far as there is an identical claim on the whole man by God. Barth recognised the two-fold claim upon the individual as being central to the understanding of the Great Commandment. The third solution is correct in that: "The commandment to love God refers us to our existence in the time and world which comes and remains, the commandment to love the neighbour in the time which now is and passes, we are in fact dealing with a first and second commandment, a primary and secondary, a superior and a subordinate, an eternal and a temporary."<sup>70</sup> Although there are two aspects of the Great Commandment they do not balance each other and the first does not prevail over the second. "It is therefore quite right that

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68. Outka, Gene, Agape: An Ethical Analysis (Yale University Press: London and New Haven, 1972) p.220

69. DOG p.409

70. DOG p.410



in the text of Matthew the commandment to love God would be described not only as the first, but also as the 'great' commandment. It is in fact the basic and comprehensive commandment, the greater circle which includes in itself the lesser commandment of love to the neighbour."<sup>71</sup>

Macmurray's emphasis upon the communal aspect of Christian ethics and his definition of Christian ethics as a matter of fellowship between man and man as well as between God and man, only takes into account the temporary human conception of relations. Macmurray's anthropocentric/heterocentric approach to ethics tends to place man's relation to man at the summit, thereby subordinating the relation of God as the Supreme Being. Macmurray did not take into account man's complete subordination to God and dependence upon God as Creator. Everything is subordinated to God's Love both man as 'isolated-I' and man as part of the 'I-Thou'. God's transcendent Love means that one no longer must interpret man's activities in a limited individual or collective sense.

Macmurray only treats part of the man, i.e. the 'I-Thou' aspect of a person, as being of importance. Nevertheless, the Great Commandment treats both the 'I-Thou' and the 'isolated-I', i.e. the total person as being of importance. Not only is the total person confronted, but the competition between the relational and the individual is not present. Barth might have concluded that the competition between man's relationships to other men and his encounter with God as an individual has been resolved by one absolute Lord. The most significant area of divergence between Macmurray and the Great Commandment must be in the order and significance of man's relationship with man. Barth's exegesis of the Great Commandment does not overlook the subordination of the relation of man to man to the encounter of God and man. It must be emphasised that



the encounter with God by man is not identical with man's relationship with another man, since the encounter of a finite being with an infinite being by definition differs from the relationship between two finite similar beings. To subordinate God's love to man's love is to subordinate the continuing and ever present to the now, i.e. subordinating the eternal to the temporary. The man-man relation does not equate with the man-God relation, but only sheds light upon it.

Ethics are a matter of eternal factors and a matter of relational factors. The now must be viewed not only in terms of present needs but also in terms of God's love and God's intentions, and not just in terms of man's ongoing temporary intentions. Although Macmurray considered general intentions to be important he did not fully take into account the fact that these must be subordinate to the general and ongoing eternal will of God which is not the product of man's relational nature.

Gardner pointed out that:

Finally, those who interpret Christian ethics exclusively in terms of personal relationships, neglect the radical meaning of the Christian understanding of God both as Creator and as Redeemer. They fail to see the goodness that there is in corrupt society as in sinful individuals and also the possibility of its being redeemed.... God is the Lord of society as of individuals, and men continually confront both His creative and His transforming Will in the social institutions and for the neighbours to whom they are related through these institutions as well as for the neighbours whom they meet directly face to face.

All of the foregoing criticisms may be summarised by saying that those who limit Christian ethics to personal relationships fail to take seriously the implications of the radical monotheism of Christian faith which rests upon the conviction that everywhere man is confronted with the will and the purpose of the One God who is active simultaneously as Creator, as Judge, and as Redeemer. He alone is the Creator; He alone is ultimately sovereign over all, and His will is to redeem and renew all that has been corrupted by sin. Men, therefore, are responsible to God in all of the relationships of oneself with other selves, no matter how indirect these relationships may be and no matter how much this responsibility may be shared by other persons or selves. <sup>72</sup>

By confining morals to community and personal relations Macmurray has limited Christian ethics to merely one set of human social activities, while in reality it is something that must be applied to the whole of human society and all things connected with human life. Macmurray has overlooked the importance of the redeeming character of God. God will redeem all that has been corrupted by sin both personal and impersonal. Man alone can never reach the ideal that he strives for, but God will forgive and correct this inevitable shortcoming. If God is not part of the equation of a moral decision, then an individual or a group of individuals will soon realise that the ideal towards which they strive will never be reached. God in purely pragmatic terms supplies the individual not only with the ideal, but also with the assurance that the ideal is more than a mythical and unobtainable phantom in the ever receding future. Man knows with his imperfections that ideals cannot be reached. One can only make ideals a reality if one allows God to be part of the equation. Christ not only gave us norms to follow, but his presence gave us clear evidence of the reality of the ideal which we strive to reach.

Macmurray's insistence upon making fellowship and community the centre of Christian ethics is correct up to a point, but it does not take into account the whole of human activities or needs. Macmurray's initial rejection of the 'isolated-I' and his concentration upon the 'I-Thou', i.e. fellowship or community, has made him draw away from the theocentric nature of Christianity and it has caused him to come perilously close to the yawning abyss of anthropology. The encounter between God and the 'isolated' individual and the salvation that this promises not only from isolation, but from sin, lies at the centre of Christian thought.

A practical objection to Macmurray's limitation of Christian ethics to fellowship may be found in his failure to account adequately for the co-operation between peoples within the fellowship, i.e. the community, and those peoples outside of the community. In fact the relations of 'Christians' and 'non-Christians' cannot be a possible area for moral discussion, since those not involved in a communal type relationship must be considered in an impersonal, non-moral way. "Far more attention needs to be given to an analysis of the nature of man as a moral being and to the significance of natural revelation. The final norm for the Christian is the agape of God in Christ."<sup>73</sup> Macmurray has fallen into some of the same pitfalls that have bedevilled the contextualists and the situation-lists.

#### Agape and God's Existence

Christian ethics cannot be reduced to a mere anthropocentric study of man's fellowship and his reciprocal relationships, which in turn leads to an empirical basis for God and morals. Christian ethics has as its central tenet the will of God for man. The central motif of Christian ethics is not man's relation to man or man's love for man, but God's agape for man and man's attempt to love God and his fellow men.

It was not love as some kind of cosmic principle of force, but the love of God (agape) which motivated Jesus' conduct both in his relationship to God and in his relationship to man, i.e. his neighbours. Jesus' ethic was theocentric and consequently Christian ethics rests upon the fact: "That God has taken the initiative in revealing His love to man."<sup>74</sup> However, God is not some transcendent Other that

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73. BFSE pp.189-190

74. BFSE p.175

represents the group or for that matter is part of the human group. God not man lies at the centre of Christian ethics.

Ramsey pointed out that: "To be is ontologically prior to to-be-for. God's existence is prior to any relations he may have to other beings. The relations may alter his self-meaning and his nature, but this again is possible only if He is self-existent."<sup>75</sup> One might argue that the 'isolated-I', i.e. the to-be, must be prior to the to-be for or the 'I-Thou'. Certainly God must be prior to any relationships either man-man or God-man, since God is the Creator. If one wishes to reason ethically within the framework produced by assuming the existence of God, the assumption about the existence of God demands that any attempt to find God and conceive of God only through man is dangerous. There is a tendency in the approach advocated by Macmurray to think first and foremost in terms of one's relations with the other persons and through this to speak of God.<sup>76</sup> The encounter between man and God is different from the relationship between men; "It is the uniqueness of the special relation involved in man's encounter with God which makes it impossible to treat all value and all relations as fundamentally alike."<sup>77</sup> Macmurray has been accused of describing God "solely in analogies drawn from personal relation and action",<sup>78</sup> because of his concern to recover the centrality of the personal in our experience.

John C. Bennett in Christian Realism pointed out the danger of trying to understand God through man's actions in the world. Macmurray reasoned that: "When man set out to realise an intention which is con-

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75. FE p.191

76. Vos op. cit., p.246

77. FE p.182

78. Vos op. cit., p.263

trary to the divine intention, they do not achieve it."<sup>79</sup>

Macmurray believed it impossible to act in defiance of the will of God. Macmurray assumed that history is the action of God.<sup>80</sup>

However, he also assumed that when man opposes this action that it is only self-frustrating. Bennett saw such an interpretation as being over-simplified. This leads, according to Bennett, to an over optimistic version of the way in which divine intention (God's Will) corrects human intention. Bennett asserted that: "I am not sure that he is right in saying that, against their wills, men always realise the divine intention. He (Macmurray) gives too little scope to human freedom to resist God and he does not see the full tragedy of life." What seems to be true is that while men may not for long realise an intention that is against the will of God, in fact they may flounder around in the "midst of divine judgement without realising in a positive way the intention of God".<sup>81</sup>

Macmurray did not fully accept the isolation of man from God and from his fellow beings by accounting for man and God only in terms of personal relationships. God cannot be understood in terms of man's actions alone. It is unreasonable to expect a man to understand fully God's intention and to act in terms of it, since man is not even able to act in concert with his group's activities and intentions. Man should not be expected to act in terms of God's wishes since the encounter is far more complex and difficult.

Since man cannot understand God fully in terms of the relational, and in terms of the other, does he have a clue to God's intention? Tillich held that man finds himself out of tune with himself, i.e.

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79. CH p.95

80. CH p.94

81. Bennett, John C. Christian Realism (Student Christian Movement Press: London, 1941) p.51

estranged when he goes against the intention of God which is part of his essential nature. Tillich wrote that: "Every valid ethical commandment is an expression of man's essential relation to himself, to others and to the universe."<sup>82</sup> Certainly God must be seen in terms of the world and in terms of *der Einzige* as well as the 'I-Thou' relation, but can one assume that one finds more than anthropocentric factors?

One cannot assume that one can find God by observing the totality of human existence and experience. God is not only more than fellowship, He is more than man, and holds the key to what man is. Consequently one must without question approach ethics theocentrically because the assumption of an antecedent God is necessary in order to understand man and his consequent relations to other men. The 'I-Thou' and *der Einzige* becomes clarified when one refers to the absolute love of God. Man's complex nature can only be understood and clarified from the perspective of the one absolute God. The spark for man and man's relationships is God's love, i.e. agape. The key for understanding the world of man and nature lies not in man's love of man or God, but God's love.

Macmurray certainly has presented an enlightening study of certain aspects of Christian ethics, such as the importance of community and fellowship in Christian thought and morals, but Macmurray has failed to account adequately for the Christian as an isolated individual who believes in God. The Christian as an isolated individual must make the decision. The 'I-Thou' relational approach, although explaining certain parts of the process of a moral decision and certainly clarifying the essence of the environment of moral decision, still fails to appreciate and provide a ground for

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82. Tillich, Paul, Love, Power and Justice: Ontological Analyses and Ethical Applications (Oxford University Press: London, 1954) p.76, hereafter cited as LPJ



the judgement of the single individual. One needs to understand not only the unique judgement of the individual, but also the continuous judgement of the individual to act or not to act. The decisions, although they are in terms of the other and sometimes for the other, are still made by individuals in terms of their feelings and experiences and with the guidance of God. Morality is not only the intention to act and the act itself, but it is primarily the decision to intend and to act in a way that is directed by the decision. The decision can be made in response, but is not simply a matter of response; it is an expression of the totality of the person in terms of fellowship and isolation and in terms of man and God. Friendship with its anthropocentric bias cannot and should not be substituted for the guidance of God as witnessed by the life of Jesus Christ. Although the other person is important, the final guide is not the other, but the love of God. The fellowship of man with man is transcended and overshadowed by man's encounter with God as Creator and Redeemer. Morality is a matter of community, but it goes far beyond community.

The Christian ethics has been called the 'ethic of love' or more accurately the 'ethic of agape'. The conception of love or agape is central to any understanding of Christian ethics. In order to conclude our examination of Macmurray's understanding of Christian ethics in light of his relational approach, an investigation of Macmurray's conceptualisation of love will prove helpful.

Macmurray defined love in terms of the 'I-Thou' human relation. Macmurray understood love solely in terms of human relations and human feelings. Macmurray betrayed his anthropological approach as well as his relational orientation when he attempted to answer the question he put to Jesus: "Why should I love people who do not

love me?" Macmurray concluded that Jesus would answer that this would be "the only way to establish a human relation between you and them".<sup>83</sup> Macmurray held that: "My knowledge of another person is a function of my love for him; ..." <sup>84</sup> Love for Macmurray is directly tied up with and defined in terms of the other. Macmurray maintained that: "Love as the positive ground-motive of personal activity, can best be defined as the capacity for self-transcendence, or the capacity to care for others. Love is, for the other: fear is for the self."<sup>85</sup> Macmurray did not disassociate love from the realities or limits of human existence. Macmurray even defined the love of God in human terms. "Love becomes a sentiment or a feeling or the exaltation that accompanies the contemplation of an idea. The love of God becomes a feeling that suffuses our consciousness in solitary meditation when we imagine the infinite power and majesty and knowledge which our mind ascribes to our idea of God."<sup>86</sup> Macmurray assumed that one should not disassociate love from the realities of man and the human mind. However, such a definition of love has the danger of blinding one to the other aspects of love that are not responsive or reciprocal in character.

The responsive assumption that underlies Macmurray's understanding of love is starkly revealed when one looks at the work of Ian D. Suttie. Macmurray was directly influenced by Suttie's work The Origins of Love and Hate.<sup>87</sup> Suttie saw love as primarily a social feeling. Macmurray considered love to be a feeling that was part of the community. Suttie defined love as an "overture demanding

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83. CH p.68

84. PR p.170

85. CF p.57

86. CS p.152

87. PR p.45, Vos Op. Cit. p.199

response from the other".<sup>88</sup> The absence of response is the origin of anxiety and rage. Macmurray expressed a supposition that paralleled Suttie's conception of love as responsive. "Love is fulfilled only when it is reciprocated. If the response is refused, the action which expresses the positive motive is frustrated."<sup>89</sup> Macmurray believed that love brought about love. "The principle upon which he (Jesus) worked was that love tends to beget love, and that mutual love creates mutual trust and conquers fear."<sup>90</sup> Love becomes love in response to love. Macmurray in his interpretation of Jesus' ethic held that: "Jesus was putting his trust in the natural reciprocity of love."<sup>91</sup> Macmurray, however, did not limit his interpretation of love to natural reciprocity.

Macmurray felt that Jesus had removed the limits to the natural reciprocity of love. Macmurray considered love to be intention, specifically the intention to achieve universal community.<sup>92</sup> Macmurray added the element of intention to the natural reciprocity of love. However, both are communal in character. Macmurray asserted that: "More prosaically, the basis of a free human community must be the intention to enter into community with others." Macmurray then significantly pointed out that: "It is in this way that love, which is always the basis of whatever human community there is, is raised in Jesus to the level of intention, so that it becomes the motive force behind the intention to create the Kingdom of Heaven

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88. Suttie, Ian D. *The Origins of Love and Hate* (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd., 1935) p.34

89. PR p.73

90. Macmurray, John, *To Save From Fear* (London, 1964) p.10, hereafter cited as TSFF

91. TSFF p.6

92. Mooney, Philip, "The Notion of Religion in John Macmurray" (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: Fordham University, 1970) p.210

the community of mankind."<sup>93</sup> Love is the motive force behind community, which clearly shows Macmurray's assumption that love should be thought of in terms of its human manifestations.

Macmurray has always asserted that love is mutual and that: "It (love) integrates human beings in a way which is positive and absolute." Macmurray then asseverated that: "for in its very nature it is unconditional, since love is in its essence the mutual affirmation by a community of human beings of one another's existence. It is thus the positive and absolute condition of community."<sup>94</sup> Macmurray interpreted love in terms of community. In fact Macmurray thought of love in terms of the community, which paradoxically does impose a condition upon love. Macmurray undoubtedly defined and understood love in terms of personal/communal relations. Macmurray has starkly stated that: "Love is indeed, the sense of community,..."<sup>95</sup>

Macmurray defined love anthropologically and he closely associated love with response and reciprocity. However, one might legitimately question that all love, particularly love in the sense of the love of God, i.e. agape, which is the Christian sense of love, can be defined in terms of community and response. Is God's love something more than universal human reciprocity and is love something more than one person's willingness to respond to another? Must love be tied to human activity?

Any discussion of the subject of love needs to be made more precise by recognising that there are different types or categories of love that one might use to clarify and qualify the term 'love'. Paul Tillich offered four categories or types of love. Tillich's

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93. CH p.67

94. CS pp.115-116

95. CS p.154

four categories of love are libido (love as desire), philia (friendship), eros (drive towards beauty and value), and finally agape (the religious dimension of love).<sup>96</sup> Tillich is not satisfied just to introduce a fourfold division between the different types of love, Tillich also identified three aspects of love which he labelled love as emotion, love as ontological power, and love as an ethical principle.<sup>97</sup> Another common division of the different types of love is the threefold one of eros, philia and agape, which are the romantic, brotherly and universal categories of love.<sup>98</sup> Tillich in his discussion of the different qualities of love tended to consider eros and philia to be related within his schema. Tillich remarked that: "The eros quality of love is in a polar way related to what could be called the philia quality of love. While eros represents the trans-personal pole, philia represents the personal pole. ... Love as philia presupposes some amount of familiarity with the object of love."<sup>99</sup> The love that Macmurray speaks of could easily be equated to the philia quality of love with its relation to eros.

However, up to this point we have overlooked the type of love known as agape. Tillich saw agape as entering into all aspects of the lives of man. Tillich held that: "agape enters from another dimension into the whole of life and into all qualities of love. One could call agape the depth of love or love in relation to the ground of life. One could say that in agape ultimate reality manifests itself and transforms life and love."<sup>100</sup> Ultimately the con-

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96. LPJ pp.5f

97. Johann, Robert O. "Love and Justice" in Ethics and Society ed. by Richard T. De George (Macmillan: London, 1968) p.27 hereafter cited as LJ

98. Norton, David L. op. cit., p.303

99. LPJ pp.31-32

100. LPJ p.33

trast is between philia as human brotherly love and the transcendent quality of the agape type of love. The love of God is the motivating and transcending love of agape which is the love of Jesus.

Anders Nygren in his monumental study entitled Agape and Eros considered the difference between agape as God's love and eros as self-love, which sharply differentiates the two types of love. However, such a sharp differentiation means that man ceases to be a moral agent in relation to his fellowman, since the love of one's neighbour which is included in the eros type of love is no longer motivated by the love of God (agape).<sup>101</sup> Macmurray has failed to note the transcendent and all prevading character of agape in all love which means that neighbourly love is confined to an extension of self-love. Nygren recognised a factor of extreme importance when he noted that man's love of his fellow man is directly linked and part of eros which is self-love. Within the area of natural affection, i.e. eros and philia, the self needs a response. Macmurray's definition of love revolved around the concepts of reciprocity and response although he attempted to link love with universal intention through community. Macmurray's only differentiation between natural love and Christian love is intention, i.e. the intention of universal community. Macmurray's definition of agape, i.e. God's love, revolved around the communal even though God is more than the Universal Other. Macmurray's understanding of Christian ethics in terms of fellowship and friendship within community tends to reduce and limit the scope of Christian love to that of philia. However, agape and philia are entirely different aspects of love. Nygren in his insistence upon an abso-

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101. BFSE p.181



lute difference between eros and agape has made man as a moral agent when not inspired by God's love an impossibility, which makes morals a matter solely concerned with God. However, Macmurray in his identification of friendship with Christian love threatened to go to the opposite extreme by identifying ethics as something that is to be seen only in terms of the other and their consequent response to the self, i.e. eros and philia are seen as the basis of love; thereby eliminating the possibility of transcendent love and God as the basis of ethics. Without God's transcendent love one cannot turn to a concrete ideal and love which would inspire and lead to an understanding of the possible actions which makes up Christian activity based upon Christian ethics.

What is the difference between philia and agape? The difference between agape and philia revolves around the fact that agape does not demand a response, i.e. it is not tied to man and his activities and self-concern. Agape is not selective but inclusive and gives without expecting anything in return and continues to give without return. Philia needs a response in order to exist and therefore has an underlying egoism. Friendship tends to die when it is not returned. Friendship not only springs from our affections for others, but also from our need of others.<sup>102</sup> The difference between philia and agape parallels the distinction that St. Thomas made between the love of benevolence and the love of friendship. Friendship assumes explicit reciprocity which is not to be found in the love of benevolence.<sup>103</sup> Agape in the same way does not demand a reciprocal response, nor is it merely something that can be reduced to selfless charity.

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102. Thomas, George F. Christian Ethics and Morality Philosophy (Charles Scribner's Sons: New York, 1955) p.584

103. Johann, Robert O. The Meaning of Love (Geoffrey Chapman Ltd.: London, 1954) p.37

Agape is more than merely response; it is the love of God and the manifestation of the love of God in man and in all other types of love. Agape is spontaneous and 'uncaused'.<sup>104</sup> Agape does not demand nor expect a response. Agape is in the form of a divine command that is addressed to the whole person.<sup>105</sup> Agape is directed towards not only the person in relation, but also to the isolated self. Agape is different from philia in its lack of dependence upon the mutuality and reciprocity of the relational. Agape is not only an activity of God and man, it is also a norm that has its ideal in God. Agape does have normative characteristics as well as personal selfless characteristics. Gardner has recognised the fact that agape is more than man's feelings of love from God.

...love (agape) is itself both a law and a gift. It partakes of the character of law in that it places an unconditional demand upon man, but it also partakes of the character of a gift in that man knows that he is loved before it is required of him that he shall love and also in that he must know himself to be loved with agape before he is able to love his neighbour with agape rather than with eros. Love may thus be spoken of as a law or a command although it is above all other moral laws. It is unconditional or absolute in the sense that there are no exceptions to it, and hence it is unlike all other 'absolute' laws and principles. It is related to the needs of the neighbour in every specific situation, but it is not therefore relativistic.<sup>106</sup>

Agape is adaptable to all situations and by definition cannot be limited to any particular set of circumstances such as relationships within a communal setting. Agape is more than just God's love of man that is manifested in neighbour-love, it is the love of God which is an ideal and a reality given as a gift and a command to lead us.

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104. Nygren, Anders, Agape and Eros trans. A.G. Herbert (Society for promoting Christian Knowledge: London, 1932) p.66

105. BFSE p.196

106. BFSE p.197

Reinhold Niebuhr questioned the fact that one can reduce agape to mutual love, i.e. the love between man and man or even the love between man and God. Niebuhr undoubtedly admitted that mutual love is a genuine sort of love, but he defined it as the sort of "love which calculates its relations to others from the standpoint of its own need of others."<sup>107</sup> Niebuhr held that mutual love could not avoid calculations in terms of the self. Macmurray's definition of all personal and communal relationships are in terms of mutuality and reciprocity. Macmurray has not fully taken into account the problems connected with the self-interested element of reciprocity which must enter into any heterocentric decision. Niebuhr held that: "sacrificial love (agape) completes the incompleteness of mutual love (eros), for the latter is always arrested by reason of the fact that it seeks to relate life from the standpoint of the self and for the sake of the self's own happiness."<sup>108</sup> Macmurray's inability to recognise the reality of the isolated individual caused him to underestimate the importance of the self-interest of the individual. The individual because of his isolation is not able to overcome his self-love. Macmurray's definition of love in terms of the other, consequently, is not a true reflection of agape, but a form of love that is close to that of eros and philia. Macmurray's understanding of divine love in terms of intended universal community favours a philia and/or eros type of love without giving thought to the necessary transcendent aspects of unconditional agape. "When one intends community even universal community, there is the presupposition of mutual love

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107. Ramsey, Paul, "Love and Law" in Kegley, Charles W. and Bretall, Robert W. Reinhold Niebuhr: His Religious, Social and Political Thought (The Macmillan Co.: New York, 1961) p.107

108. Niebuhr, Reinhold, The Nature and Destiny of Man Vol.II (Charles Scribner's Sons: New York, 1943) p.82, hereafter cited as NDM vII

between persons, but there is no immediate assumption of agape. The idea of love must be connected with the agape of God which is spontaneous and unconditional.

God must always be the 'middle-term' in a relationship that will be moral in Christian terms, therefore, the communal is not the essence of Christian morality. One is only moral in Christian terms when one's actions are motivated by agape even though this also includes eros and philia. Agape safeguards the character and intensity of neighbour-love. Kierkegaard in the Works of Love noted that:

When God is the middle term in judging love,... the judgement is this: divinely understood, is it really love to show devotion such as is demanded by the object of love? Next, is it love, divinely understood, on the part of the object of love to demand such devotion? Every man is God's servant, therefore he dare not belong to anyone in love unless in the same love he belongs to God, and he dare not possess anyone in love unless he and the other belong to God in this same love; a man dare not belong to another human being as if the other were everything to him; a man dare not permit another to belong to him in such a way that he is everything to the other.<sup>109</sup>

On the practical level one needs the love of God to modify the relationship between persons. Love in terms of equal regard may become one of unquestioning obedience or even adoration of the other.<sup>110</sup>

God's love is necessary in man's love for man in order to modify man's love of the other, since without it man cannot hope to love man in an unqualified and unconditional way. Man's love of the other may easily turn towards self-love or adoration of the other. The modifying love of God keeps man from slipping towards either of these extremes. Agape is surely more than just mutual love and the universal intention of community, i.e. the universal brotherhood of man, even though this is an important manifestation of agape.

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109. Kierkegaard, Soren, Works of Love, trans. Howard and Edna Hong (Harper and Brothers: New York, 1962) p. 113

110. Outka op. cit. p.53

Kierkegaard considered love in terms of the other to be a dangerous concept without the modifying love of God. Kierkegaard wrote about eternal love that: "such a love stands and falls not by some accidental circumstance of its object; it stands and falls by the law of eternity - but then it never falls; such a love does not depend upon this or that, it depends only on the one liberating force; consequently it is eternally independent."<sup>111</sup> Agape is by definition independent of the object of its regard, therefore agape cannot be only a communal/personal type of love, which depends on the existence of the other.

Max Scheler in On the Eternal in Man rejected the notion of love which is found only within a social setting. Scheler completely dismissed the Nineteenth Century idea identifying altruism and love. This reduced love to the notion that the other had to be loved as the other, which reduced love into a love of humanity alone,<sup>112</sup> which completely eliminates the central standing of God. Heterocentrism certainly favours the anthropocentric in place of the theocentric outlook. Scheler considered such an approach to love as mere abstraction which will identify the inclination to go help or improve others with the essence of love.<sup>113</sup> The other is not the essence of ethics for a Christian, who must base his ethics upon God's love. Stated simply love is more than charity, but charity is part of love.

Scheler noted that one should "love God first above all things".<sup>114</sup> Scheler reasoned that the enlightenment and the classical renaissance had over-emphasised neighbour-love at the expense of the love of God.

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111. Kierkegaard, Soren, A Kierkegaard Anthology ed. by Robert Bretall (The Modern Library: New York, 1946) p.302

112. Scheler op. cit., p.477

113. Ibid

114. Ibid p.367



Such an emphasis envisages man as an external phenomenon which means that man's soul and spirit and even his salvation is ignored.<sup>115</sup> This could be translated into valuational terms as meaning that man's worth is not intrinsic but instrumental. This might have a far-reaching effect if one's concern tended to be for the one that one has responded to and not to the long term consequences of one's actions. If one only concentrates upon the immediate external other, such a view makes truly far reaching judgements impossible. Man when involved in ethical decisions based upon the abstraction of the intentional universal community or anything else that places man's external welfare at the pinnacle might well ignore the underlying intangible factors in a person's make up as well as ignoring the Creator. Bodily welfare, i.e. that which is easily observable in the other, is not the goal towards which one should aim, since such humanitarian views easily lead to people being forced to die in an institution such as a hospital with no thought for their dignity or individual identity.

Scheler held that: "The new humanitarian love of man (and only man) is as much a principle of levelling and disintegration as the Christian commandment of love is one of edification and organisation."<sup>116</sup> Scheler asserted that: "It is in and through God that for the first time we are bound in spirit to one another. This is exactly the meaning of the 'first' and 'greatest' commandment (Mark 12: 30-31) which merges self-santification and love of one's neighbour in their common root, the love of God."<sup>117</sup>

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115. Ibid

116. Ibid p.369

117. Ibid p.375



Garnett pointed out that there is thoughtfulness and goodness in both philia and agape. Agape means "thoughtful, good will, pure and simple, unpossessive and independent of the response of its object".<sup>118</sup> Philia implies a joy in the other and a mutual sharing of interest, but it does demand reciprocity. Love in the Christian sense is more than just fellowship, it is a mutual existence in God, i.e. love shifts its focus from the field of philia to the field of agape. Christian ethics cannot be reduced to merely a matter of fellowship and love of the other, without God as 'the middle-term', the concept of heterocentrism becomes reduced to one's love of other men without the binding force of God.

A love which seeks only the good of the other has several basic problems. Niebuhr noted that: "a love which seeketh not its own is not able to maintain itself in historical society. Not only may it fall victim to excessive forms of self-assertion of the others, but even the most perfectly balanced system of justice in history is a balance of competing wills and interests and must therefore worst anyone who does not participate in the balance."<sup>119</sup> One of the basic problems of reducing Christian ethics to the concern for the other is that there is no brake upon the self-assertion of the other.

Another problem that stalks the concept of fellowship and community as the basis of Christian ethics is the close relationship that develops "into what might be called an egoisme a deux, an exclusive mutuality that is indifferent and even hostile to the interests and claims of the larger community in which we find ourselves,..."<sup>120</sup> The inwardness of the communal approach on the small scale is a very dangerous element in any relationship which will always have a corrupting influence upon the community.

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118. Garnett, A. Campbell, Ethics: A Critical Introduction (The Ronald Press Co.: New York, 1960) p.83

119. NDM VII p.72

120. LJ p.39

When Christian ethics is reduced to fellowship and the accompanying intention of universal community, the assertion of the other, the adoration of the other, and egoisme a deux become problems. God needs to be the first part of the Christian ethical decision process. God is needed as the modifying force in human relationships. One cannot base one's ethical decisions only upon how one ascertains the other and in terms of the intended universal community. One needs to be constantly aware of God as Creator and his part in personal relationships and the ideal and reality of His existence.

#### Justice

The final area of interest centres around Macmurray's understanding of justice with its pragmatic overtones in light of his understanding of morality, Christian ethics and love. However, Macmurray's understanding of justice is ambiguous and shows the inconsistency caused by over-emphasising the relational.

Macmurray considered justice to be an amoral ideal, however he defines justice from two different standpoints. Justice can be deemed as an aspect of morality along with generosity and benevolence.<sup>121</sup> However, in the case of justice one can demand for oneself justice from others. When one reflects upon justice from this standpoint it becomes "essentially negative; a kind of zero or lower limit of moral behaviour".<sup>122</sup> However, from the other standpoint justice "can appear as the very essence of morality without which the higher virtues lose their moral quality".<sup>123</sup> From this standpoint Macmurray claimed that: "Justice seems to be the sine qua non of all morality, the very essence of righteousness, in a sense the whole of morality."<sup>124</sup>

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121. RR p.188

122. Ibid

123. Ibid

124. Ibid

Macmurray viewed justice both as a minimum factor within morality as well as the essence of morality. This ambiguity stems from the two factors within justice that are necessary for Macmurray's interpretation of justice and ethics. Macmurray considered justice to be "the negative aspect of morality which is necessary to the constitution of the positive, though subordinate within it."<sup>125</sup> Macmurray defined morality in terms of its positive aspect, but holds that it can only be realised through its own negative such as justice. Macmurray averred that: "Without justice, morality becomes illusory and sentimental, the mere appearance of morality."<sup>126</sup> Macmurray deemed justice to be the safeguard against the evils of communal self-interest. Macmurray held that justice safeguards "the inclusiveness of the moral reference and so the unity of the Other. To be generous without being just is to be generous to some at the expense of others; and so to produce a minor mutuality which is hostile to the interest of the larger community. It is to create and defend a corporate self-interest, and this destroys the universality of the moral reference."<sup>127</sup> Vos regarded justice as a corrective to the excess emphasis placed upon mutuality. Justice in terms of the impersonal does seem to be at odds with the concept of justice in terms of the personal/communal.

Macmurray certainly has a twofold perception of justice.

The full realisation of the moral intention can only be reached in a relation between two persons in which each cares wholly for the other, and for himself only for the sake of the other. In such a relation, it would seem there is no place for justice. It would appear to be completely transcended by the abolition of self-interest. But this is not the case. Even in such an ideal, if it could be achieved, the negative aspect would still be present, though completely subordinated to the positive,

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125. Ibid

126. Ibid pp.188-189

127. Ibid p.189

and functioning as a differentiating force within it. In the relation of two agents, this means that each remains himself and differentiated from the other; there must be no self-identification of one with the other, or the reciprocity will be lost and the heterocentricity of the relation will only be apparent. ... To maintain equality of persons in relation is justice; and without it generosity becomes purely sentimental and wholly egocentric. My care for you is only moral if it includes the intention to preserve your freedom as an agent, which is your independence of me. ... But now, if the negative aspect of morality which is justice, is considered by itself, it appears as the minimum requirement of morality in all personal relations, whether positive or negative, direct or indirect, ... There is no more than the minimum required to recognise, in the intentionality of action, that you are also a person, and that the struggle is itself, however negative, a relation of persons. But the requirement of justice in our actions has a wider sweep; it is the bond, not of community indeed — because for community much more is required — but of society; of any form of co-operation which is co-operation of persons. ... Now in my direct relations with others, whether these are personal or impersonal, I can hope to secure justice in my dealings with them by limiting my activities for the sake of their interests, providing they will do the same in their dealings with me. For I am in communication with them, and we can consult together and come to an agreement about what is fair to each of us, so far as our separate courses of action affect one another and impinge upon one another. This can be achieved by a common consent to general principles by reference to which each of us can determine what would or would not be fair to the other person if we did it.<sup>128</sup>

Justice for Macmurray is not merely a matter for community, but also a matter for society. This forces justice to be both 'positively moral' as well as 'negatively moral', since morality can only be a matter for the community, i.e. personal relations, and cannot enter into social, i.e. impersonal, relations. Macmurray considered justice to be essential to personal relationships, which means it is the essence of morality. However, justice at the same time is the maintenance of co-operation by means of general principles within a society, which is a minimal interpretation of morality. Macmurray's interpretation of justice is amphibolous.

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128. Ibid pp.189-191

This ambiguity has its origins in Macmurray's insistence upon a communal limitation to morality with its sharp division between society and the communal/personal. Justice is certainly an aspect of morality, but it must certainly operate outside of the "moral sphere of the community" which means that one either offers two different forms of justice, one which is moral and one which is not moral, or one has a definition of justice that is broad enough to encompass both the communal and the social. The best definition, however, should be one that is simple and applicable to all events and relationships.

Macmurray's restriction of morality to the sphere of reciprocal love, which is a threat to the unconditional Christian notion of love, contributes to his amphibolous interpretation of justice. What is the relationship between love and justice? For Macmurray justice is an aspect of morality, which intends that "my claim shall not take precedence over the claims of others. Justice is an obligation that each of us has to other people."<sup>129</sup> Macmurray further underlines his personal/communal definition of justice as a matter of trust by maintaining that: "without justice, co-operation becomes impossible. If the co-operation is compulsory it must then become a co-operation in mutual self-destruction."<sup>130</sup> Justice is only positively moral in terms of the personal/communal sphere. Macmurray held that justice was not enough and it is "only the negative aspect of morality, and itself is for the sake of friendship".<sup>131</sup>

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129. Ibid p.201

130. Ibid p.204

131. Ibid p.205

PART V

Conclusion

CHAPTER 15

Conclusion



of personal relations must be doomed to failure if it tries to exclude or differentiate between the personal and the impersonal type of justice. Even if it is possible for one to hide behind the functions of a role it is also possible for one's most intimate personal qualities to be exhibited by one's adherence to a role. The sharp distinction between the impersonal e.g. a role, and the personal is the underlying cause of the confusion and unnecessary dualism in Macmurray's approach to justice. This is not necessary since one must have the same understanding of justice both for personal and impersonal relations, since one cannot clearly identify the two relations, nor easily divide the social from the communal.

Macmurray in his refusal to understand man in terms of the 'isolated-I' as well as the 'I-Thou' ultimately reduces justice to a matter of personal relationships since the impersonal approach to justice demands something beyond the communal.

Love and justice are mutually interdependent. "Love unites; justice preserves what is to be united."<sup>139</sup> Justice is not a matter of impersonal or personal relations, but a single manifestation of agape. Love is not just a matter of the 'I-Thou' relation, but a manifestation of God's love, i.e. agape, in all human actions. Christian ethics is not a matter of just friendship or fellowship, but man's encounter with God and God's love which is manifested in man's action, and God's creation as well as man's actions towards other men, groups of men and the world.

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139. LPJ p.71

Macmurray confined justice to the negative aspect of personal relationships in terms of equality in the 'I-Thou' or as a matter of agreed upon recognition of personhood and the bond of society and co-operation. However, man must make more than just 'I-Thou' or 'social' decisions. Justice is the expansion of love beyond the bounds of egoisme a deux.

Macmurray's presupposition that there is a division between society and community has caused a false and confusing picture of justice to develop; with justice becoming either a minimum and/or essential part of a moral action, which is determined by how one perceives the relationships that are involved. Justice is a moral factor in society and community since it is not determined by one's interpretation of human relationships, but by God's transcending love, i.e. agape.

Justice may be thought to have an element of self-interest which caused Macmurray to assume that it is sometimes only a lower limit to morality. Macmurray's insistence upon considering man in terms of the relational means that self-interest is regarded as something that is foreign to true human nature. Dorothy Emmett in Rules, Roles and Relations criticised Macmurray's sharp distinction between 'role relations and personal relations'.<sup>138</sup> Emmett maintained that role relations, which are a type of impersonal relations, are interwoven with personal type of relations. Macmurray has failed to realise that in most situations, even in the family, the role relation, such as mother or husband, is interwoven or blended with the personal relation. Any attempt at making moral decisions in terms

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138. Emmett, D. Rules, Roles and Relations (Macmillan: London, 1967) p.171

of the self and the 'others' and (c) finally from obligations, discerned by the individual self, to the wider obligations which the community defines from its more impartial perspective.<sup>135</sup>

Justice should not be interpreted as the mediating factor between the 'I' and 'Thou' or the minimum negative limit of morality. It is a manifestation of God's love between individuals as seen in the community, and between the person and the group as well as between one group and another. One should not try and limit positive justice to the personal relationship between the 'I-Thou'. Justice is not just the maintenance of "equality of persons in relation",<sup>136</sup> but it is the extension of man's relationship beyond the limits of egoisme a deux. The norm for justice is agape, and the manifestation of love is justice in all situations. Indirect relationships can be a manifestation of God's love when undertaken in the spirit of agape. Morality as well as justice should be able to extend beyond the limits of 'I-Thou' with its debilitating possibility of egoisme a deux. Justice cannot be defined in terms of personal relations and society, but it must be defined in terms of agape.

However, this is not an attempt to substitute personal love for justice, i.e. justice is not just for the sake of friendship or philia, but because of God's love. Justice is a manifestation of God's love for man because man's love of man should reflect and be created by God's love of man. Justice offers a framework of principles in which one may try to work out God's love and will for man when man deals with man. "Justice is a necessary instrument of love."<sup>137</sup> Justice is a manifestation of love which makes it possible for a man to make a moral decision in both a direct and indirect relationship.

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135. Ibid

136. PIR p.190

137. Winter, Gibson, Social Ethics (SCM Press Ltd.: London, 1968) p.72

be moral is dangerous. It is "a dangerous sentimentality to exalt pure and unmediated meeting of subjects in the I-Thou relationship as the only true good".<sup>133</sup> Man in his encounter with the other encounters him on more than just the 'I-Thou' plane. Man encounters his neighbour or his fellowman as a person and as a member of a social institution. If one only confronts the other morally as a member of a community, then one is not confronting the total individual. One must question the assumption that indirect and impersonal relationships, i.e. the minimum scope of justice, are non-moral or amoral relationships, i.e. they are outwith or less in the scope of God's redeeming love.

Justice is a manifestation of man's love. Niebuhr saw justice as extending the communal aspects of man as did Macmurray but he had reservations about this process. Niebuhr asserted that: "A relation between the self and one other may be partly ecstatic; and in any case the calculation of relative interest may be reduced to a minimum. But as soon as a third person is introduced into the relation even the most perfect love requires a rationale estimate of conflicting needs and interests."<sup>134</sup> This is true even in the smallest community, i.e. the family with one child. Justice is a manifestation of love, since it tries to extend the love of God as manifested in the community. Niebuhr held that:

Systems and principles of justice are the servants and instruments of the spirit of brotherhood in so far as they extend the sense of obligation towards the other, (a) from an immediately felt obligation promoted by obvious need to a continued obligation expressed in fixed principles of mutual support; (b) from a simple relation between a self and one 'other' to the complex relations

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133. BSFE p.263

134. NDM VII p.248

In order to understand Macmurray's concept of justice in terms of Christian ethics, one needs to view the idea of justice in the light of God's love. Christian ethics is basically a matter of agape, whereas Macmurray's conception of ethics is basically a matter of philia. Macmurray's way of understanding society in moral terms is to expand society into a universal community. Society in order to be moral must be reduced to the communal or become like the community, neither of which can be considered to be completely possible, because of the limiting factor of egoisme a deux. Social justice for Macmurray is not a matter that can be considered in positive moral terms, but only communal justice can be considered in moral terms. However, social justice should be an aspect of God's love and consequently must be a matter of importance for Christian ethics.

In view of Macmurray's tendency to restrict his view of Christian ethics to the personal/communal, one sees the demand for social justice weakened. To emphasise personal relations at the expense of social justice is very dangerous. In 1937, the Oxford Conference on the Church, Community and State issued a warning that: "Undue emphasis upon the higher possibilities of love in personal relations, within the limits of a given system of justice or an established system may tempt Christians to allow individual acts of charity to become a screen for injustice and a substitute for justice."<sup>132</sup> Justice is subject to God's love and is a manifestation of God's love on all planes of human existence, both in society and community as well as within the 'I-Thou' and the 'isolated-I'. To consider man in purely personal terms and to consider only those decisions made in personal/communal terms to

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132. BFSE p.262

upon which the uniqueness and intrinsic value of the individual can be anchored without it being completely dependent upon the idea of the community. I have argued in Chapter 10 that by abandoning the concept of the existence of the self in isolation, i.e. the 'antecedent self', Macmurray has undermined the uniqueness and intrinsic value of the individual. The concept of der Einzige or the 'single one' is essential, since it takes into account the actual isolation of each individual, because of the limitations of any form of communication, i.e. because of the fact that each of us can be said to be 'trapped in his own skull'. The concept of der Einzige emphasises the intrinsic value of each individual.

In my view unalloyed collectivism in the form of a completely communal approach threatens the intrinsic value of the individual, since the self becomes nothing more than a product of the relations within the community, thereby wholly subject to the values of the community. I have argued that there is an 'original endowment' that precedes the 'I-Thou' relation, and that this 'original endowment' is then shaped by the community into what may be called 'personality'. I have argued that Macmurray has placed too much emphasis upon the community by defining the self only in terms of the other. By depending upon a communal definition of the self, one is forced to confine one's definition primarily to the collective, although the collective is only one component or part of human nature. Consequently, if the self is defined only in terms of the personal other and the community, i.e. collectively, it leads to the dominance of the community which thereby threatens to make the individual incidental.

By utilising exclusively the idea of community to interpret and to define the self, I have argued that Macmurray has reduced the concept of the unique individual to an extension of the collective



in Chapter 10, the definition of the self totally in terms of its relationship with the other is inadequate, since it only provides at best a definition of personality. Macmurray assumed erroneously that the self as subject did not exist, thereby only allowing for the possibility of the self as one term in a relationship, i.e. something that is dependent upon the other or the Thou for its existence. Moreover, even though one may not know the self as subject, this does not necessarily imply that the self as subject does not exist. Macmurray's rejection of the self as subject, which is directly linked to his rejection of the self as der Einzige led to his misrepresentation of the self as a product of only the 'I-Thou', i.e. something that is totally dependent upon the community for its existence.

In my view a consequence of Macmurray's rejection of the single one is the implication that the common life is the substratum for the individual. Consequently, the self may easily be thought of in terms of, or even reduced to, external factors, i.e. those things that are accessible to other persons. By making the community, i.e. one's personal relationships, the basic phenomenon, the individual is in danger of being reduced to a mere epiphenomenon. This has far-reaching ethical ramifications, since the assumption that the individual is a secondary phenomenon may easily lead to the assumption that the community comes before the individual. Moreover, by concentrating upon the communal aspects of human nature, one may fail to deal with the problems of mutual exclusion between individuals and the isolation that exists no matter how intimate, in the relationship.

By recognising the existence of 'an original endowment' that precedes one's relationship with other persons, a base is provided

society are to be utilised as principles or ideals, then the internal contradictions within the principle of community comes into the picture. One is also confronted by the inexactness of the two contrasting categories with society's constant drive towards community and community's constant drive towards society.

I have argued that one can neither realise community in practice nor can one afford to dispense entirely with community as an ideal. However, if community is used exclusively as a starting point for understanding the self, religion and ethics, one can expect to confront some problems because of its internal contradictions and its inexactness. Community, when used exclusively, threatens to become an unrealisable, enigmatic and unbalanced ideal.

My analysis of Macmurray's concept of community revolves around its application to three different areas, i.e. the self as a product of community and/or more specifically the 'I-Thou' relationship, religion defined in terms of its communal functions and ethics entirely in terms of the other and the community. My analysis of Macmurray's application of the concept of community has revealed certain doubts about the unalloyed use of the idea of community when defining and analysing the areas of the self, religion and ethics. Stated simply, I have argued that the basic assumption, that the concept of community and its constituent parts alone is sufficient to explain and define the self, religion and ethics, is only partly correct.

My initial conclusion is that the idea of community by itself is inadequate when used to explain completely and to define the self. In my view Macmurray's insistence upon reducing the self to a dependent part of the 'I-Thou' relation with its concomitant rejection of der Einzige is an oversimplification. As I have argued

which is the tendency within the 'I-Thou' relation to exclude any third person from the relationship. The second of these contradicting factors is the need for openness within a community i.e. the need to always include other persons. Consequently, within any community there is the constant conflict between intimacy and growth and/or between inclusiveness and exclusiveness. This anomaly was noted in Chapter 8 and elsewhere. Macmurray did not adequately deal with the problems presented by the internal contradictions that exist within any community. The idea of community is not invalid simply because there are two competing factors always to be found within it, but the competition between exclusiveness and inclusiveness within the community clearly shows that an actual community is a fragile structure. The idea of community as well as any actual community has an inherent weakness, which points to the questionable nature of any analysis based exclusively upon the idea of community.

The concept of community as presented by Macmurray not only contains an ever present internal contradiction, but it also fails to offer a clear-cut alternative to the impersonal world of society. Macmurray did not indicate whether the two categories he identified, i.e. community and society or the personal and impersonal groups, are principles that can be applied to all human groups or actual divisions between groups. The difficulties of viewing human groups in terms of two contrasting categories, i.e. in terms of either community or society, is discussed in Chapter 9 Section 2. By assuming that the two categories are meant to be actual divisions into which a particular group must be placed, one immediately confronts the impossibility of determining the classification of any particular group, since each group will display both personal and impersonal facets, which makes any rigid classification questionable. Moreover, if one assumes that the categories of community and

Macmurray has placed the concept of community at the very centre of his definition and thinking about religion, the self and ethics. One of his basic assumptions is that the idea of community provides a solid foundation upon which one can build a complete analysis and working hypothesis, not only about the self, but also religion and ethics and about Christian ethics in particular. This assumption is clearly in evidence in Macmurray's presentation and utilisation of the three modes of apperception. The analysis in Chapter 3 Section 3 of Macmurray's religious mode of apperception illustrated that the concept of community is at the very centre of his understanding of all human experience and reflection, since community is the focal point of the religious mode of apperception and the religious mode of apperception is the focal point for all human experience and reflection.

However, I have argued that a completely communal or relational<sup>a</sup> view does not represent adequately or explore fully the concepts of the self, religion and ethics. By using the communal as his only starting-point and denying the validity of the person in isolation, Macmurray failed to represent satisfactorily the depth and the many sides of human nature and existence. In my view the concept of community does not by itself provide a satisfactory foundation because of its internal contradictions and because it fails to provide an adequate and complete definition and explanation of the self, religion and ethics.

I have argued that Macmurray's dependence upon the idea of community and his utilisation of the concept of community is threatened by a serious internal contradiction within the concept of community. There is a contradiction within every community that cannot be resolved, i.e. two opposing factors or tendencies. The first of these factors may be labelled as Egisme a deux,

(a) see footnote 64 p. 243

interpretation of the individual. Moreover, the idea of community does not by itself provide a completely satisfactory representation or interpretation of the self. The idea of community as well as the reality of community provides only a partial basis for understanding and analysing the self and human nature.

As in the case of Macmurray's definition of the self in terms of the community, his interpretation of religion in terms of community alone is not adequate since it may well lead to a completely social interpretation of religion. Macmurray concluded that religion is about community.<sup>1</sup> In my view such a conclusion leaves open the possibility of religion being reduced to a merely social phenomenon. This is also applicable to the idea of God as the Universal Other, since the assumption that God is the Universal Other may easily lead to the assumption that God is nothing more than a symbol of community or at the very best God is the generalised experience of other persons. It, thereby threatens to reduce the idea of God merely to a collective idea or ideal. One may easily conclude that God is nothing more than a product of the matrix of society and religion.

I have argued in Chapter 11 that Macmurray's approach threatens to reduce religion to nothing more than a constituent of society, by overlooking the solitary aspects of religion, i.e. the individual as a lone seeker after God. Macmurray rejected the Whiteheadian thesis that the individual is a primary source in the religious experience,<sup>2</sup> i.e. religion is not only the art and theory of one's relationships with other men, but it is also the art and theory of one's internal struggle and quest. The communal view of religion cannot fully come to terms with the fact that the person as 'the single one'

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1. PR p.159

2. RE p.225



is partially separated from his fellow man in his quest to find faith and that one's actions towards others depend upon the individual's own judgements and internal convictions. In my view Macmurray's failure to take into account the solitary aspects of religion, has distorted his concept of religion in the same way that it distorted his analysis of the self by overstressing the communal. By overstressing the communal aspect of religion Macmurray failed to account fully for the spiritual aspect of religion. Religion is not only a matter of man's communal drive, but the recognition of man's deep internal solitary quest after God. One's spiritual growth is not only in terms of one's social or communal awareness, but a matter of one's internal quest for faith. One encounters God both as an individual and as a part of a group. If one assumes that religion is completely interwoven into the fabric of human nature as Macmurray has done, then religion must be conceived of as a fundamental fact both in the social and the solitary components of life. I would argue that religion is intimately interwoven with the community, as did Macmurray, but I would also argue that the individual's drive to come to terms with his isolation within the birth/death cycle is also intimately interwoven into religion.

Macmurray be assuming that the self is fundamentally a product of communal relations has consequently concentrated only upon the communal aspects of religion. Furthermore, since Macmurray has argued that the 'a priori self' does not exist, the solitary aspect of religion becomes a questionable area of inquiry. However, the solitary quest or the individual seeker after God can deal with the mutual exclusion and isolation that is present within the lives of all men no matter how intimate their relationships with other persons. The solitary religious quest is an essential aspect of religion as well as the relationship within the community.



In my view Macmurray failed to utilise correctly and to recognise the importance of isolation in the life of each individual, despite his participation in a community, in his definition of religion and the self, and also in his analysis of ethics. Macmurray stated that the only truly moral mode of apperception was the communal. Macmurray defined a morally right action as one that intends community,<sup>3</sup> with the additional presupposition that the communal approach is essentially heterocentric. In other words the basis of any moral action is the intention to put the other before the self, i.e. the other becomes the focal point of the moral inquiry. However, one is immediately faced with the difficulty of trying to understand the other fully enough to be able to make the correct ethical decision, i.e. the constant impenetrable aspects of every man, because of every man's isolation, becomes an immediate factor.

I have argued in Chapter 13 that a heterocentric, i.e. communal, view of ethics is over-simplified and will lead to questionable conclusions. Macmurray by contrasting egocentrism with heterocentrism has basically advocated a form of altruism as opposed to egoism as a basis for making an ethical decision. However, any form of altruism can lead different people into making different and incompatible decisions and to consequently undertake incompatible decisions and to consequently undertake incompatible courses of action. This is clearly evident in the example of two people trying to let each other through the same door. Unalloyed heterocentrism, which is basically the outcome of an unalloyed dependence upon the communal conception of the self and religion, like altruism does not necessarily lead to a practical or workable form of ethics.

Another practical problem with heterocentrism and the communal mode of morality is that the other person becomes the source of value. However, the other person should be the beneficiary of the value not

the source of value. Heterocentrism is paradoxically parasitic upon the concept of self-interest since it must consider morality from the perspective of the self-interest of the other. Heterocentrism only succeeds in removing self-interest away one place, thereby hiding it but not coming to terms with the consequences of self-interest. Heterocentrism unmodified by a clear recognition of the part played by self-interest and the unworkable aspects of altruism is a questionable ethical approach.

A communal apperception of morality may also lead to dangerous presuppositions being applied to any ethical decision, since one may only consider the harmony of the community when making an ethical decision thereby applying only a minimal interpretation of morality. The interpretation is minimal, since one is only influenced by the expectations of the group, which is itself limited and guided by the lowest common denominator within the group. Since the obligation to reciprocate cannot be viewed as strictly an ethical requirement, then the expectations of the group cannot be viewed as strictly an ethical requirement upon which an entire ethical theory may safely be built.

As in the case of the communal view of the self and religion, the communal view of ethics without the counteracting force and recognition of the isolation of the individual presents a distorted and inaccurate view. The individual is the final source of every moral decision, even though he may be influenced by the group or make the decision as part of a group. Ethical decisions may be taken while one person is in dialogue with another person or persons, but the final decision is taken by each persons as an individual. The decision is not taken by a nebulous other which is the product of interpersonal relations. Such a view has obvious dangers, since it

may be interpreted to mean that each individual is not accountable for his decision.

An unalloyed heterocentric view of the person does not provide a clear or adequate valuation of the individual. I have argued that Macmurray did not provide adequate support for the intrinsic value of each individual since he placed too much emphasis upon the relational, i.e. the instrumental value of each person. A person's instrumental value is predicated upon a person's intrinsic value. Only a being that has value in himself can in turn feel a need to value another. Macmurray's communal view of morality assumes that a person's intrinsic value is dependent upon a person's instrumental value, i.e. his relationship with the other, which completely reverses the correct order.

In Chapter 14 Section 1 I have argued that Macmurray's idea of community when applied to ethics and in particular to Christian ethics, threatens to reduce Jesus' teachings about ethics to simply an anthropological study. In my view Macmurray came close on occasions to reducing ethics to anthropology as had Feuerbach. However, such a definition or interpretation of Christian ethics is totally at odds with the God centred teachings of Jesus Christ. If Christian ethics had a strictly anthropological foundation, the genuine religious life would have man at its centre and all worship and communion with God would be judged solely in terms of the profit that it brings to mankind. However, the basic thrust of Christian ethics is theocentric and neither anthropocentric nor heterocentric.

As I have argued in Chapter 14 Section 3 Macmurray's interpretation of Christian ethics implies that the Great Commandment basically stresses the love of neighbour, which threatens to make the love of God secondary. However, the Great Commandment has as its primary

thrust the love of God with the love of neighbour as the result of the love of God. I have argued that the love of our fellow man is not the primary consideration, but this does not mean that the love of man for man is a secondary factor. What needs to be recognised is that the eternal is primary, i.e. God's love, and that the temporary, i.e. man's love, is a factor within the eternal. Man's love is a part and a direct result of God's love.

Macmurray by limiting his definition of love to its human dimensions confined love to its responsive and reciprocal characteristics. However, God's love, i.e. agape, goes beyond response and reciprocity. Agape is not only the love of God manifested in man's love of man, but it is also the love that transcends all things. The concept of agape is also demonstrated in that God is the 'middle term' in any relationship. Love in terms of equal regard, which closely corresponds to Macmurray's view of love, i.e. philia and/or eros, may easily be reduced to an unquestioning obedience of the other or adoration of the other. Agape as the modifying love of God keeps the 'I-Thou' relation from degenerating into unquestioning obedience or adoration. If one's ethical approach is basically theocentric as opposed to heterocentric one is less likely to reduce love to adoration or to a mere response.

The main thrust of my argument has been that Macmurray's concept of community does not by itself provide a satisfactory or adequate interpretation of Christian ethics. By concentrating upon the community, i.e. upon personal relations, man's intrinsic worth is threatened with reduction to a merely instrumental value. Each man's value should not be dependent only upon external factors that are available to other persons. Another problem with assuming that the community is the essence of morality is that when confronted by collectivism one does not have the necessary counteracting force

of individualism, which means that the community may impose its values upon the individual. The Christian doctrine of man-in-community emphasises that the human being is a part of personal relationships as a unique person, and is not simply a fragment of society.

In my view communal ethics, which is one-sided, may easily become reduced only to a matter of the morality of organisation, but Christian ethics is more than just one's relationships with other men. Man's actions should echo not the will of others, but the transcendent and all encompassing love of God that is the basic ingredient of Christian ethics. Christian ethics is centred upon the love of God that binds man to man. God's modifying love as opposed to neighbour love, makes it possible for one man to seek the good of another man without the other being put above or over against the self.

In conclusion a summary of my criticisms of Macmurray's dependence upon the concept of community to describe and/or define the self, religion and general ethics is that he oversimplified each of these areas by abandoning certain essential and related considerations. I would argue that Macmurray failed to satisfactorily and completely deal with the self as 'the single one', with the solitary religious quest and with the individual's necessity to make an ethical decision, because of his rejection of anything outside of the relationship between men which includes its extension the community. The dangers of such an oversimplification is illustrated by Macmurray's one-sided communal interpretation of Christian ethics, which placed too much emphasis upon the community and man's personal relationships, i.e. upon mankind, while overlooking the centrality of God. This led to Macmurray's anthropocentric interpretation, which abandons or overlooks the theocentric interpretation i.e. that God's love makes the love of one man for another



possible. It also led to Macmurray's false assumption that Christian ethics is basically heterocentric, which is to say that it is basically altruistic since it is advocating that ethical decisions should be made only in terms of other persons, which ignores the central and modifying love of God.

However, this is not to say that Macmurray's approach is without merit or interest to the student of Christian ethics. Macmurray has offered a number of enlightening and worthwhile insights into the three major areas of concern that have been examined in this study.

Firstly, in Macmurray's discussion of the self, one is made to realise the importance of other persons in the formation and existence of personality. Macmurray clearly and correctly argued that the community provides a significant input into what becomes the personality. He admirably succeeded in emphasising the importance of the other in our individual development and throughout each person's lives. He also admirably succeeded in underlining the centrality of personal relationships and the community in personhood and religion.

Secondly, Macmurray's discussion of religion is of great and lasting value. He drew the startling, but well founded conclusion that man's whole life is rooted in religious experience. He reached this conclusion by assuming that religious experiences are those experiences focused upon the personal, mutual and reciprocal relationships that are to be found within the community. Macmurray pointed out that the concept and reality of community provides a starting point for a clear, solid and basic explanation of religion. A distinct advantage of viewing religion in terms of community is that religion cannot be reduced to a matter of rare mystical exper-



ience, i.e. confined to a few rare and unique experiences, but it makes religion a part of everyday experience. Religion for Macmurray is not something that is understood only after much study and meditation, i.e. something that is far removed, but something that is part of the very fabric of life. He has placed religion at the very centre of life with his thesis that religion is the mode of apperception that focuses upon the personal 'I-Thou' relationships within a community. Macmurray has without question demonstrated that religion does not have to be understood just in terms of subjective and rare experiences, while ignoring the objective and mutual experiences of each man during each day. Macmurray's presentation of the communal aspects of religion is very efficacious, since it makes one realise that religion is beneficial on the practical level in that it contributes the rituals and other activities of the group that directly contribute to a community's self-awareness that provides the link and unity, that is necessary, between the members of the present community and the past and future members of the community. Religion gives to the community a sense of self-awareness and to each member of the community something that is beyond the self and the present, whereas community gives to religion a solid and physical foundation.

Within the third area, that of ethics, Macmurray has convincingly argued that one should not base an ethical theory upon 'goal-seeking' or upon 'rule-obeying', which is in direct agreement with his general rejection of the mechanical and contemplative modes of apperception. Macmurray's basic thesis is that Christian morality is to be found outside of these two negative categories. Macmurray, along with several other thinkers, has presented a strong case for Christian ethics in that it needs to be considered as a third and separate category of ethics.

### SUMMARY

Macmurray's basic understanding of religion and the self as well as ethics in terms of community, although enlightening and valuable, does present definite problems. The concept of community itself does not provide a completely satisfactory basis for analysing the self, religion and ethics firstly because of its internal contradictions. Secondly, because by concentrating upon the community and the personal relationships that contribute to the community, one may easily overlook the isolation of each individual. Consequently, Macmurray does not confront the total possible constituents of the self, religion and ethics. The concept of the community needs to be modified in the light of the insights provided when one closely examines man as an individual, i.e. man as der Einzige, as well as man as a part of the 'I-Thou'.

This study has a general application in that it underscores the difficulties produced when one tries to understand religion and particularly Christianity empirically at the expense of the spiritual quest. By concentrating upon the empirically valid aspects of Christianity, i.e. the community, one may be able to integrate religion more firmly into a general schema that contains science and art, but one might also overlook the spiritual quest. An adequate interpretation of Christianity and Christian ethics must never rely solely upon an empirical investigation unless one is willing to abandon Christianity as a religion and consider it only as a philosophy and/or anthropology.

In conclusion, Macmurray's basic thesis is invaluable for anyone wishing to identify the empirical base of religion and ethics, but one should be fully aware that anthropology alone does not provide an adequate means of analysing Christian ethics, nor does it provide

completely the necessary analytical tools. The danger of viewing things only in terms of community is that the community may well become the principle phenomenon to be investigated, the individual consequently being reduced to an epiphenomenon, which is in direct disagreement with Christ's concern for each man's salvation. In summary, one might say that Christian ethics and the Christian religion is not merely a matter of community, but that the community is an integral part of both Christian ethics and the Christian religion.

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